

**Institute of Party History of the Central Committee of
the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party**

Hungarian Anti-Fascism and Resistance 1941–1945

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Table of Contents

I. Preface	7
II. The Development of the Anti-Hitlerite Independence Movement	9
II. 1. Hungary's Entry into the Anti-Soviet War	9
II. 2. Development of the Anti-Fascist Independence Movement	17
II. 3. Formation of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee and the Demonstration on March 15, 1942	27
III. Temporary Setbacks of the Independence Movement Efforts to Reorganize the Hungarian Party of Communists and the Independence Movement	48
III. 1. Terror Campaign Against the HPC and the Anti-Fascist Forces	48
III. 2. Efforts to Change the Pro-Axis Policy of the Kállay Government. The Communists' Struggle to Reorganize the Party and the Independence Movement	60
IV. Struggle of the Hungarian Party of Communists to Eliminate the Save-the-Regime Policy, to Rally National Forces and to Achieve a Separate Peace Treaty	75
IV. 1. The Impact on the Working Masses of the Soviet Army's Victories at Stalingrad and Voronezh	75
IV. 2. Foreign and Home Policy of the Kállay Government in the First Half of 1943	80
IV. 3. Anti-Hitlerite Left-Wing Parties and Organizations in the First Half of 1943	86
IV. 4. Conflicts and Opposed Views in the Camp of the Anti-Hitlerite Forces Formation of the Peace Party	92
V. Failure to Rally Anti-Hitlerite Forces The Flop of the See-Saw Policy	102

V. 1. Impact of the Italian Events Party Alliance of Social Democrats and Smallholders	102
V. 2. Activity of the Peace Party Anti-Fascist Political Movements and Actions in the Second Half of 1943	113
V. 3. Failure of Kállay's Breakaway Attempts	122
V. 4. The German Occupation of Hungary Formation of the Hungarian Front	133
VI. Struggle of the Anti-Fascist Forces for a Break with Hitler The Horthyist Clique's Attempt to Break Away and Its Failure	160
VI. 1. The Lakatos Government	161
VI. 2. The Communist Party's Struggle for the Unfolding of a General National Resistance The Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising	194
VI. 3. The Establishment of a Military General Staff and the Plan for an Armed Uprising	205
VI. 4. Mass-Scale Popular Resistance to Block Plans for the Destruction of the Country	216
Index of Names	231

I. Preface

This book is the first to provide the foreign reader with a concise scholarly history of anti-fascist national unity and resistance in Hungary. It describes the special position of the country in World War II; the consequent shifts in the policy of its government, characterized by an ambiguity culminating in the abortive attempt to break with Hitler's Germany on 15 October, 1944; and the fundamental causes of these shifts, inherent in the nature of the regime itself. It examines the impacts of the two German interventions (March 19, 1944 and October 15, 1944) on government policy and on the anti-fascist resistance movement, with special regard to armed struggle.

The book offers a detailed summary of the development, the vicissitudes and finally the achievements of Hungarian anti-fascist struggle. It informs the reader of the program of anti-fascist national unity and the political forces behind it; the political endeavours of the Communist, the Social Democratic and the Smallholders Parties; on how they came to cooperate; how the conflicts arising within their united front led to a whole series of disruptive political and ideological problems, and of the final result of their activity: the establishment of a front for the common struggle called National Front, which subsequently developed into a basis and starting point of coalition policy in the post-1945 era.

This survey of the anti-fascist struggle also sheds light on how, beneath the surface, there developed a "second" Hungary which, by shedding so much blood to free the country, secured itself a right to shape the country's fate at the time of a historic turning point of world-wide relevance.

In my synthesis I relied on the material of my monographs on the history of the Hungarian resistance movement: *A kommunisták harca a Hitler-ellenes nemzeti egységért* (The Struggle of the Communists for an Anti-Hitler National Unity), 1968; *A Magyar Front és az ellenállás* (The Hungarian Front and the Resistance), 1970; and *Magyar antifasizmus és ellenállás* (Hungarian Anti-Fascism and Resistance), 1975. In my research, I drew on documents and memoirs available in the national, party, and trade union archives and on some in private possession; on the books and press materials of the Hungarian libraries, and on documentary

volumes on the subject.* I also drew on monographs discussing Hungary's role in World War II, and greatly relied upon two comprehensive works: the second volume of *The History of the Hungarian Working Class Movement* published in 1967, and *Magyarország története 1918–1945* (The History of Hungary, 1918–1945) published in 1974.

The Author

* On official Hungarian policies cf. *Magyarország és a második világháború* (Hungary and World War II), 1959; *A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország* (The Wilhelmstrasse and Hungary), 1968; *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen* (An Indictment of Nazism), Vols I, II, III, 1958, 1960 and 1967, respectively; *Magyar-brit titkos tárgyalások 1943-ban* (Hungarian-British Secret Talks in 1943), 1978. On the anti-fascist struggle cf. *Dokumentumok a magyar forradalmi munkásmozgalom történetéből 1935–1945* (Documents on the History of the Hungarian Revolutionary Working Class Movement, 1935–1945), 1964; *Magyar szabadságharcosok a fasizmus ellen* (Hungarian Freedom Fighters Against Fascism), 1968; *A magyar népfront története—Dokumentumok I. 1935–1945* (History of the Hungarian Popular Front—Documents I, 1935–1945), 1977.

II. The Development of the Anti-Hitlerite Independence Movement

II. 1. Hungary's Entry into the Anti-Soviet War

On June 22, 1941, fascist Germany attacked the Soviet Union without prior declaration of war. The German fascists hoped to defeat the Soviet army by the *Blitzkrieg*, to break the resistance of the Soviet people, and to bring about the total surrender of the Soviet Union well before winter.

Hitler launched his surprise attack from a very advantageous position. His well-equipped and well-trained army, superior in number at the time, was able to exploit the entire economic potential of the subjugated European countries, as well as the economic and military power of the satellite countries. The Hitlerite aggression meant the coming of a life-and-death struggle for the Soviet people fighting fearlessly for the soil under their foot.

Hitler's assumption that the Soviet Union would be left to its own resources, that Britain and the United States would join the anti-Soviet war or, in the worst, choose the well-tested policy of non-intervention, had proved false. In view of the pressure of their anti-fascist masses and world public opinion, both great Western powers thought it better to join forces with the Soviet Union in its struggle against fascist Germany. The talks between the Soviet Union and the Western powers, and later their treaties of alliance and the establishment of the international anti-fascist alliance, had a decisive influence on the events. The alliance, comprising more than 20 countries, was of immense importance not only in the struggle for victory over the Axis powers, but for the resistance movement of the subjugated and satellite countries as well.

Simultaneously with the German attack, the Soviet Union was attacked by Italy, Rumania and Finland. However, the declaration of war by Horthy's Hungary happened to be a couple of days "late". During the second phase of the war, and later, in memoirs published in the West, some representatives of the Hungarian ruling classes tried to invoke this delay as a sign of early resistance, frequently referring to German pressure and brute force. Recent historical research, however, has swept these arguments away.

From the mid-thirties on, Hungary has moved ever closer to fascist Germany. This process had several clearly distinguishable stages, marked by Hungary's adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact and to the Tripartite Pact and her participation in the destruction of Yugoslavia in the field of foreign policy, and by

the incitement of extreme revisionist aspirations, the Győr Program, the 1939 National Defence Law, a whole range of measures against left-wing forces and the anti-Jewish laws in domestic policy. Joining the anti-Soviet war was a logical historical consequence of all this.

There was little difference among the various groups of the ruling classes in their desire to see the elimination of the Soviet Union. When war broke out in 1939, they only regretted that it was not aimed at the Soviet Union. The government of Count Pál Teleki (in office between 1939–1941) had done its best for a predatory war against the Soviet Union already at the time of the Soviet–Finnish war. On the morrow of Hitlerite aggression, József Közi Horváth, a representative of the clergy, announced in Parliament that "...everyone must be aware of the fact that yesterday began the settling of a problem most has weighed heavily, as a nightmare, on Christian civilization for the quarter of a century. *When a sudden shift in political tactics brought about an agreement between our friends and bolshevism, we, Hungarians, the old and early victims of bolshevism, contemplated it with special bitterness. Our joy today is as great as our bitterness had been...*" (My italics—I. P.) The truth of the matter is that the cause of Hungary's delay in entering the war must be sought not in the resistance of the Horthy regime, but in the fact that first Hitler had not claimed Hungary's direct military participation in the anti-Soviet war.

From the moment when the Hungarian General Staff and the government had learned some of the details of the Barbarossa Plan, the Horthy regime did its utmost to ensure Hungary a share in the anti-Soviet plans. However, the Hungarian government had decided that it would be most expedient for them to wait until military participation was called for, thinking that a voluntary offer of their services would decrease the possibility of more territorial revision. For Hungary had territorial aspirations not against the Soviet Union, but against Romania and Slovakia, whose participation in the anti-Soviet war was motivated, among other things, by a desire to gain Hitler's support for their own territorial demands vs. Hungary among others. Therefore, the Hungarian government sought to reserve part of the army to fight for a final solution of territorial revision. They also counted on the fact that war, especially Hungary's voluntary entry, would not be popular among the masses.

On June 23, the Cabinet decided to break off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. This, however, was considered insufficient by the military leaders who demanded immediate active participation. The right-wing newspapers published after the German declaration of war make it evident that the breaking off of the diplomatic relations was considered a first step only. The papers suggested that Hungary would soon join in the war. On June 24, *Függetlenség* (Independence), the semi-official government paper wrote: "It is not at all surprising, but, indeed, seems almost natural for Hungary to be the first to side with heart and soul and full sympathy with the Axis powers in this new crusade. All the more so since Hungarians had been the first to experience the horrors of bolshevism; the Hungarian people had been the first to stand up against a Jewish–Marxist dictatorship and they were among the first to join the Anti-Comintern pact."

On June 24, statements of the German military leadership and certain leaders of the Nazi Party suggested that they, too, expected more of the Hungarian government. With Slovakia entering the war on June 25, the problem of the declaration of war became all the more pressing. The Hungarian government feared that any further hesitation would mean the loss of German benevolence. As in the case of so many important former decisions, a race had begun to win the confidence of the Nazis. The final decision was taken *voluntarily, and not under German compulsion*. According to a joint plan of the Hungarian and the German military leaderships, on June 26, German aeroplanes with Soviet markings bombed the town of Kassa and its vicinity. One and a half hour later the Cabinet met and gave its consent to Hungary's entry into war. In the morning of June 27, before the agenda, Prime Minister Bárdossy briefed Parliament on the declaration of war in a short speech.

Using the Kassa provocation as a pretext, the government launched a violent anti-Soviet propaganda campaign. The front pages of the newspapers were filled with dramatic headlines and reports about the "barbaric attacks of Soviet planes" and were all calling for revenge. Every effort was made to prove that the Soviet Union threatened the very existence of Hungary. The press presented the anti-Soviet war as a "defence of civilization", "crusade against communism", "defence of the country". Some papers expounded quite clearly why Hungary was to wage war against the Soviet Union. This is how another semi-official government paper, *Esti Magyarország* (Evening Hungary) put the idea: "The aim of this war is, *above all, to put an end to the constant threat represented by the bolshevism...* From the Hungarian point of view, the elimination of bolshevism means a priceless gain and a more secure future...", because it would bring an end to "*internal revolutionary tendencies*". Although the Hungarian ruling circles made some faint objections, these were aroused by the fear that, in the war, Hungary might be pushed into confrontation with Britain and the United States. As to the necessity of eliminating the Soviet Union, however, there was full consent.

After declaring war, the government spared no effort to create the appearance of some kind of national unity behind its war policy. Influenced by the successive German victories in the first weeks of the war, the various groups of the ruling classes, all reactionary, drew closer. Much less promising was the situation prevailing among the working masses. Fascist propaganda tried in vain to initiate something like the war fever so characteristic of 1914, which, though for a short time only, had gripped part of the public opinion. World War I was still too close, and its wounds too deep for the Hungarian people to forget the horrors of war.

At the outset, there was a war boom, and thus the population did not feel the immediate impact of the burdens and horrors of war. Both the territorial revision of 1938–41, in the course of which Upper Northern Hungary, North Transylvania and Bácska, all taken away from Hungary under the Trianon peace treaty, were reannexed, the easing of unemployment, and the relative improvement of the living conditions made the situation easier for the government. However, soon the

regime had to face an accumulating series of negative factors, too: a state of emergency, implementation of a war production system, rapidly increasing prices, and wages lagging far behind, increasing war burdens, ever more frequent military service, a permanent and increasing food shortage, and the destructive war itself.

Consequently, the Hungarian people was neither very enthusiastic, nor definitely against the war. Their passivism infuriated the fascists. "It is a cause of no small wonder and also somewhat tragic, that twenty years ago we could hardly recover from the terrible destruction caused by bolshevism in Hungary too, and yet the masses still fail to rise, and bells do not toll...", Antal Incze remarked in his address to the Lower House on June 25.

Thus the passive attitude gave the government grounds for serious concern. For fear of the masses, it did its utmost to prevent any clear manifestation of dissatisfaction.

Already the days prior to Hungary's entry into the war saw a rapid succession of administrative measures designed to gag the workers.

After the declaration of war, on June 30, a decree appeared ordering the internment of the communists and those suspected of being communists. A strict prohibition of public gatherings came into force on July 1. Summary jurisdiction was announced for the fourth time since 1939, and it was also extended, while other decrees introduced compulsion of work and ordered the setting up of special punitive labour companies to be sent to the front. On October 28, 1941 a special court of the Chief of General Staff was set up to try "all insurgent activities directed against established social order". Its sentences were not subject to appeal. Confirmation of death sentences fell within the competence of the Chief of General Staff, a proscription that excluded practically all possibility of reprieve for anyone sentenced to death.

These measures were primarily aimed against the illegal Hungarian Party of Communists (henceforth HPC). Between 1939 and 1941, already several thousands of communists had been imprisoned, interned or put under police surveillance; this number now rose significantly. Between June 29 and September 20, 1941, in the region of North Transylvania alone, more than one thousand communists and suspected communists were arrested, 800 of whom were imprisoned or interned up to the end of the war. Communists were arrested in large numbers in the Southern Region as well. The number of the interned grew by two to three thousand in a few weeks. Later, internment camps functioned at Kistarcsa, Nagykanizsa, Topolya, Sárvár, Szabadka, Kolozsvár, Jászberény, Ricse and even later at other places, too. People were sent there without any legal proceedings. The legal party of the working class, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the trade unions, too, were also subjected to repression and terror.

After Hitler's declaration of war, the SDP leadership was influenced by many factors. They had already known that the Soviet Union could be attacked at any moment. They had a promise from the Minister of Home Affairs, Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, known for his pro-British sentiments, that in case Hungary entered the

war, he would do his utmost to prevent the banning of the party. But the series of attacks against the SDP after the declaration of war made its existence extremely precarious. The extreme right as well as the gendarmerie and the Chief of General Staff, who had disapproved of the party's existence for a long time, thought the time had come for a final reckoning. The banning of the Social Democratic Party was demanded in Parliament by interpellations. The majority of the MPs demonstrated violently against the social democrats.

In a memorandum to the Minister of Home Affairs, Chief of General Staff Henrik Werth accused the SDP and the trade unions of sabotage, violation of the bans on gathering and of anti-war propaganda. Although he did not demand explicitly a ban on workers' organizations, his tone and the way he marshalled the facts clearly indicated that he was working towards that goal.

The right-wing opposition of the government, the Arrow Cross Party aping the Nazis, launched an abortive attack against the headquarters of the Construction Workers Union in an attempt to initiate a series of assaults and thus disrupt labour-movement organizations and create such conditions that would prohibit legal party and trade-union life. In some districts, for instance in Csepel, a big workers' centre, the Arrow Cross went from flat to flat and from factory to factory, canvassing signatures for a petition demanding the banning of the SDP and its central organ *Népszava* (People's Word).

Parallel with this concentrated attack on the legal working class movement, local potentates began to liquidate workers' organizations at several places. Workers' homes were used for quartering soldiers or for other military purposes; they were sealed and left empty for months. On the outskirts of the capital, and especially in the countryside, rooms rented for party meetings or the collection of trade union fees were either seized or the owners were forced to give the tenants notice to quit. At several places, the local party chairmen and secretaries, trade union secretaries and other officials were interned, called up for military service, or threatened therewith because of their "suspicious behaviour". As a result, the membership of the Social Democratic Party and of the trade unions declined; many of the previously active party members withdrew and there was a temporary fall in political activity.

On June 24, the SDP leadership discussed its future policy. They knew very well that a German victory would seal the fate of both Hungary and the legal working class movement. They also knew that if the party were banned, their own fate would greatly depend on the solidarity of the organized workers. In the days following the German attack against the Soviet Union, it became obvious that, in this war, the Soviet Union and the Western powers would fight fascism not "collaterally", but together. These considerations imparted some flexibility to the behaviour of right-wing leaders.

The SDP leadership unanimously condemned both the attack against the Soviet Union and Hungary's participation in the war. Their speeches, previously full of anti-Soviet and anti-bolshevik statements, now reflected a moderate support for the Soviet Union. "Hands off the Soviet Union" was their slogan. The events on the

battlefield were followed with keen interest, and social democratic leaders frequently expressed their hope that the fascists would not be able to defeat the Soviet Union.

After the excitement of the first days, the attention of the right-wing leaders gradually turned towards the unfolding anti-fascist world coalition. Hope soon became reality when the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States decided to fight Nazi Germany together. This convinced them that the war would end with Hitler's defeat. The balance of forces within the anti-fascist coalition showed beyond doubt that the real winner of the war could only be the West. Although they were concerned over the fact that the victors' camp would include the Soviet Union, too, they excluded the possibility that it might play an important role in the reorganization of Europe. In the field of domestic policy, however, this realization had the peculiar effect of their gradual giving in to government policy instead of accepting a more militant role. They estimated the outcome of the war to be favourable for the social democratic movement, and, therefore, concluded that their most important task was *to protect the legality of the party and the trade unions, and thus salvage the movement uninjured for the postwar period.*

Accordingly, the day Hungary entered the war, SDP leaders instructed all party and trade union secretaries to prevent strikes and all forms of political action that might be used as a pretext for banning the party. They also prohibited cooperation with the communists.

The leadership appealed to the organized workers for increased discipline, "ardent work", and abstention from debates and the expression of conflicting opinions. They also sought to persuade the workers to report and hand over to the police those who agitated against the war, spread pamphlets or encouraged strikes or sabotage. Their strongest argument, set forth by Károly Peyer, General Secretary of the Trade Unions and Chairman of the SDP, in a letter addressed to the Minister of Home Affairs on July 27, and in a memorandum on August 12, was that their legal status was the most important guarantee of undisturbed production, labour discipline, and the prevention of the "extreme actions so characteristic of the working class". Géza Malasits expressed the same view when he addressed the November 13th session of Parliament. These arguments were repeated each time the workers demanded a more positive stance or action. Thus the policy of the party leadership was characterized by a certain duality: they condemned participation in the war, ranged themselves alongside the international anti-fascist coalition, and anxiously followed the life-and-death struggle of the Soviet army against the fascist aggressor, but they also demanded that the organized workers support the government efficiently, although not directly, in its war efforts.

However, the majority of the organized workers were not influenced by the party's official policy, but followed the communists, the left-wing leaders of the SDP and the trade unions, as was dictated by their class-consciousness. This allotted an important role to the communists (Gyula Kállai, Ferenc Földes, András Kasztel, Aladár Mód and Géza Losonczy among others), and the left-wing social democrats (Árpád Szakasits, Lajos Gosztanyi, Mihály Földes and others), i.e. the

editorial staff of *Népszava*. Some of the SDP local secretaries and leaders (many of them also members of the illegal HPC), the party's National Youth Committee (NYC), strongly influenced by the communists, and the left-wing officials of the trade unions also chose struggle instead of opportunism. After the aggression against the Soviet Union, they gained more and more ground among the organized workers.

The leading figure of the growing left-wing of the SDP and the trade unions was Árpád Szakasits, General Secretary of the party and editor-in-chief of *Népszava*. Árpád Szakasits had already proved in the late thirties that he was for a more definite workers' policy, as opposed to Peyer's reformist, opportunist, and go-slow line. He did not exclude the possibility of cooperation with the HPC, i.e. the creation of a workers' unity of action. He recognized the necessity of uniting all anti-fascist forces, and understood that the primary task of all progressive forces was to defend the country's independence and prevent a declaration of war.

On June 23, 1941, at the first meeting of SDP chairmen and secretaries after Hitler's aggressive attack, Szakasits expressed his belief that only the Soviet Union could win the war. This opinion was at that time also voiced by certain right-wing leaders, who even proposed cooperation with the communists without, however, taking a single step towards that goal. Árpád Szakasits instructed party secretaries to seize every opportunity "to meet, as often as possible, outside the usual weekly meetings", and, of course, to circumvent supervision of the meetings by the authorities. He suggested that communists and social democrats cooperate, exchange information and discuss their activities and tasks.

However, he, too, was often over-cautious. At the meetings of chairmen and secretaries he sometimes supported the policy of the reformist leadership, but discussions, the intelligent and convincing arguments of left-wing or communist secretaries, often made him change his stance. It was of great political and practical significance that his high position allowed him to express his left-wing opinions both in the party and in *Népszava*.

Despite special orders and threats, the editorial board of *Népszava* denied to embrace the anti-Soviet propaganda of the Hungarian press. Moreover, it published a growing number of anti-war articles and, within the limits prescribed by censorship, grouped reports from the Eastern Front so as to project a realistic picture of the superhuman efforts of the Soviet people.

After the prohibition of all public gatherings, communists and left-wing social democrats held their illegal political discussions at workers' homes and on party premises. The number of tourists making excursions into the hills or elsewhere increased significantly, since excursions proved to be an ideal occasion for political discussions and debates. The National Youth Committee played a leading role in this field.

These gatherings grew to such proportions that in August, after a warning from the Minister of Home Affairs, Károly Peyer had to introduce severe regulations. Some members were expelled from the party, and the custodians of several workers' homes were summoned before the executive committee to be reprimanded severely.

At a meeting of party and trade union secretaries, Peyer said angrily: "We strictly prohibited, in writing, too, meeting on trade union premises . . . and now we must learn that trade union premises were the scenes of left-wing agitation, and that meetings on the premises were tacitly allowed." He branded as traitors those who were ready to permit such activities. This action of the right-wing leaders aroused general consternation in the ranks of the organized workers.

The Independent Smallholders Party (ISP), consisting mainly of well-to-do and small peasants, was anti-German, but loyal to the regime. How did it respond to the declaration of war? From Autumn 1939 onwards, it was observing events "with arms at the order", but limited its activity to Parliamentary debates. In the winter of 1940, its leaders protested against Hungary's joining the Tripartite Pact, but thought that sufficient to demonstrate their oppositionary position. They did not approve of waging war against the Soviet Union, because already at that time many a sign had indicated that this would also mean conflict with the Western powers. This position was best expressed by Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, one of the most consistently anti-Nazi leaders of the party. In a memorandum to Prime Minister Bárdossy on August 5, 1941, he wrote that while it was true that Hungary had to fight bolshevism, in his view, the correct government decision would have been to allow "volunteers" to fight. He requested Prime Minister László Bárdossy to make the government "stop enforcing unity at all costs in the field of foreign policy", and provide instead "some kind of opportunity for the opposition to express its views".

This view was most probably shared by the pro-British circles of the ruling classes, too, surrounding former Prime Minister István Bethlen. They thought that Bajcsy-Zsilinszky's scheme might allow Hungary to avoid direct military conflict with the Great Powers cooperating with the Soviet Union—but not with bolshevism!—, and in case the war were lost, they would not be judged the same as fascist Germany.

As far as domestic policy was concerned, the Smallholders Party, instead of altering its tactics of "arms at the order" radically, embraced an even more cautious policy. On June 23, the day after the German attack, they hurried to demonstrate their loyalty to the government: "Today . . . here in Parliament, I must assert before the whole nation that this is no time to strive for the settling of inter-party political struggle. Today we must not refrain from sacrifice and submission in our attempt to create a nation-wide unity", Zoltán Tildy, Acting Chairman of the Smallholders Party stated. Tildy repeated his political "truce proposal" at the Autumn session of the Lower House. The minor liberal bourgeois parties kept their silence.

War and increasing government repression kept back the National Peasant Party (founded in the summer of 1939, and grouping the poor peasantry and the populist left-wing intelligentsia) from growing into a genuine party. Its leadership addressed the poor peasants through *Szabad Szó* (Free Word), presenting its stance on important foreign and domestic political issues as well. *Szabad Szó* had some 50 000 readers, representing a force that permitted the leadership to exert some influence. They condemned Hungary's participation in a war which they saw primarily as a

source of new burdens for the peasantry, of bloodshed and the eventual destruction of the country. Therefore, they took a strong stand for active anti-war struggle.

At these fatal times, it was the Hungarian Party of Communists that showed a way out of the predatory, anti-popular war.

II. 2. Development of the Anti-Fascist Independence Movement

After the declaration of war, the main task of the HPC was to survey and evaluate the new situation; to define the tasks and to gather and line up all anti-war and anti-fascist forces.

The policy of the HPC was based on the popular-front policy adopted in 1936 and aimed at the gathering of all democratic forces. This policy, however, underwent serious modifications after 1938 as a result of the growth of German influence, the increasingly pro-Nazi policy of the Hungarian governments, the dangers threatening the independence of the country and, last but not least, the various revanchist and belligerent endeavours. The situation in Europe had made it imperative for the progressive Hungarian forces and especially the working classes to expand their anti-fascist struggle to German fascism threatening the independence of their country. The struggle waged for the democratic transformation of Hungary had to be developed into a nation-wide fight for liberty against the German and Hungarian fascists, and anti-fascist popular-front policy had to be expanded into an anti-Hitlerite policy of national unity.

The above new political program of the HPC was formulated in the period immediately preceding the anti-Soviet war. The policy of the so-called independence front, more complex and relying on a broader base than that of the popular front, embraced two inseparable correlative tasks: 1) the break with Hitler and the establishment of friendly relations and economic cooperation with the neighbouring countries, the Soviet Union, and the democratic Great Powers; 2) the elimination of the fascist regime, and the creation of democratic Hungary. Concisely propagating this policy was the slogan "For an independent, free, democratic Hungary!".

After the declaration of war, the communists considered it their primary task to answer the questions of greatest interest to the masses. "Who is going to win the war?" "What will happen to Hungary in case one side wins, and what if the other?" "What is to be done?" The Central Committee of the HPC gave its answers at his sessions held at the end of June and in September.

A few days after the German aggression, the Central Committee of the party revised the objectives of the April 1941 program. Among others, the following goals were included into the program of "independent, free, democratic Hungary" adopted in the spring of 1941: break with the Axis powers, and the normalization of our relationships with the Soviet Union, the democratic Great Powers and our neighbours. In the field of domestic policy, the program demanded the

democratization of both the administrative and the social system, a radical land reform, and the settling of issues concerning national minorities and social welfare.

The Central Committee retained these aspirations as the guiding principles of party policy. The direct objective, however, had to be modified. Until then, the progressive national forces were mobilized first of all against the war plans of the ruling classes, in order to prevent the declaration of war, while from then on, *withdrawal from the war and the conclusion of a separate peace treaty* were emphasized as the primary aims of all anti-German forces. The HPC definitely stated that Germany and its henchmen *would lose the war*, and emphasized the ephemeral nature of the rapid victories gained by the fascist troops on the Eastern front. The resolution adopted at the end of June stated that the main task of the communists was to do their utmost to overcome the defeatism and pessimism generated by German successes, by cruel terror and war propaganda among the masses and even within the working class. It also exposed the true nature of the Kassa provocation, and emphasized that the defeat of the Soviet Union and Hitler's victory would seal the fate of Hungarian independence forever. Therefore, the victory of the Soviet Union and *our withdrawal from the anti-Soviet war was in the interest of the entire nation, and provided its only chance to gain independence and start a democratic transformation.*

The Communist Party called all forces ready to fight against the senseless anti-Soviet war under the banner of anti-Hitler and anti-war struggle. In its September resolution, the HPC Central Committee *proposed to launch an anti-German political movement, i.e. an independence movement, that was to include, beside the bourgeois parties and the legal and illegal parties and organizations of the working class, the anti-German wing of the government party as well.*

The HPC leadership was fully aware of the objective power relations, of the fact that the leaders of the legal oppositionary parties and trade unions would never follow them if the independence movement were to couple struggle against Hitler with the demand of the immediate overthrow of the regime. Such a demand would necessarily have frightened off the anti-German groups of the ruling classes as well. The HPC also took into account that, under the combined effect of the government's policy of "enlarging the country" in the previous years and the war boom, the popular basis of the Horthy regime had broadened significantly. Moreover, since the background of the Kassa provocation was still unknown, most people could not discern the real motives behind the declaration of war. Therefore, the leaders of the HPC assumed that, if their demands included the overthrow of the Horthy regime, that would divert significant forces from the independence movement, and would thus hinder the cooperation of anti-fascist, anti-Hitler national forces.

Accordingly, the HPC adopted new slogans—"Separate peace treaty!", "Down with the Bárdossy government!", "Not one soldier for Hitler!"—expressing those demands only that were apt to mobilize the masses anxious about the fate of Hungary and interested both in defending national independence, and in ending the war.

The HPC was striving to make its policy *known, understandable and acceptable* not only for the communists, but for the members of the working class, the peasantry, and all other forces interested in the anti-war struggle, as well. The party decided to use all possible means to do away with the fragmentation of the democratic forces and create, despite the differences of their opinions, a single bloc of resistance based on the common wish to achieve independence.

An important role was played in this respect by the press and propaganda committee of the party. Its members, Gyula Kállai, Ferenc Földes and Aladár Mód, established good relations with the editorial boards of *Népszava*, *Szabad Szó*, and some radical anti-German bourgeois papers like *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation), *Újság* (Newspaper), *Kis Újság* (Small Newspaper) and *Független Magyarország* (Independent Hungary). These papers contributed to the press debate launched in the summer of 1941, in the course of which the program of the HPC was brought to the attention of the public.

The press debate consisted of two main phases. The first elucidated those problems and differences of views of the anti-fascist groups that originated back in the second half of the thirties and hindered the establishment of a popular front. Already at that time, the communists warned about this split, but were unable to present their standpoint to the public.

Articles published in the April 13, 1941 issue of *Népszava* touched upon the two crucial problems of anti-fascist unity. Imre Kovács, writer and politician, a leader of the Peasant Party, argued the necessity of cooperation between workers and peasants. Another Peasant Party writer and politician, József Darvas, together with Gyula Kállai, called for a real nation-wide unity, the creation of a movement similar to, and using the experiences of, the March Front, a democratic popular-front organization founded in 1937, but destroyed soon afterwards.

The Easter issue of *Népszava* met with an unexpected response. Letters dealing primarily with the unity, and the interdependence of workers and peasants flooded the editorial board. *Magyar Nemzet* joined in the debate and dealt with similar problems in several consecutive Sunday issue.

Lajos Jordáky from Northern Transylvania called for a "popular unity" broader in scope than a worker-peasant alliance. He stressed that "the joining of forces between workers, peasants and the intelligentsia cannot be complete and effective unless it finds a way to appeal to the national minorities living with us. Our coexistence is a historical fact." The national minorities, on the other hand, have to understand that their wounds can only be healed, and their fate changed, if they cooperate with the progressive forces of the country. Gyula Szekfű, the renowned historian, also expressed his opinion in *Magyar Nemzet*, trying to clarify the relationship between the middle class, the working class, and the peasantry. Although that newspaper still viewed the organized workers with some reservations and plainly rejected Marxism, it reflected a growing recognition of the fact that, in post-war Hungary, a decisive role would have to be accorded to the two oppressed classes.

However, the conditions of cooperation with the middle classes and other bourgeois groups as defined by the editorial of *Népszava* and Imre Kovács's reply to it still repelled *bona fide* petit bourgeois and bourgeois groups from fighting together with the working class and the poor peasantry.

The communists, while criticizing those views which tended to limit the scope of national unity, also sought to avoid the sharpening of conflicts. Instead, they tried to focus attention on issues common to all interested in the struggle for independence. In an article summing up the first phase of the debate, the communists pointed out that "there exists a bridge between the working class and middle class. . . there is a genuine possibility of cooperation. Workers are ready to join forces with all the progressive and resolute strata of the middle class *in order to ensure independence for Hungary, and achieve and maintain civil rights*. But this unity also means that the working class will not abandon one iota of its principles."

The second phase of the debate was initiated by an article of Imre Kovács entitled "Letter to the Peasantry" published in *Népszava* on July 8. His aim, as he later explained, was "to give once again a definite summary of the main features of the political behaviour of the peasantry in the new situation brought about by the German-Soviet war. . ." In his opinion, the new situation excluded all possibility of cooperation with the urban middle classes and the petty bourgeoisie, the same as rich peasants had no place in a movement of the peasantry: "We should trust only those who come from our own ranks" he wrote. He did not find the "temporary political situation" brought about by the anti-Soviet war suitable for "placing within a larger framework" the program of the social liberation of workers and poor peasants. Therefore, instead of analyzing the concept of national unity from the point of view of the main tasks facing the country, he restricted his observations to the point of view of the poor peasantry. This standpoint hindered the establishment of the anti-fascist national front that had become an absolute necessity as a result of Hungary's participation in the anti-Soviet war.

Gyula Kállai answered Imre Kovács in his article "Common Fate—Vital Question", also published in *Népszava*, on August 3, 1941: "Today, when the topics on the agenda are how to avert the consequences of the declaration of war, how to ensure national independence, eliminate the remnants of feudalism, and give a democratic solution to the agrarian question, it would be a mistake to attempt to rely on the poor peasantry alone when there is a real opportunity for cooperation with the middle peasantry and, at times, even with the rich peasantry. Disregarding the possibility of their contribution would be a serious mistake."

The communist view on national unity aroused great interest among those strata and individuals who were resolved to fight fascism, and to achieve national independence. While some politicians, mainly representatives of the poor peasantry, agreed with Imre Kovács, the majority participating in the debate were in favour of broadening cooperation. The fact that communist journalists gave clear, comprehensive, carefully elaborated and historically sound responses to the questions posed in the debate played a decisive role in forming a correct standpoint. "Can we indulge in *ruling out in advance* allies who are forced into this camp by their

own interests, can we afford to *narrow* in advance the possibilities of expansion?" asked Ferenc Földes. And his answer was a definite "No! There are groups and strata of not only the peasantry but even the middle class that are driven towards our common aim both by their actual situation and their former way of thinking."

The efforts of the Communist Party soon yielded good results. Various representatives of the petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie indicated their willingness to cooperate in the joint struggle. With articles like "The Defence of a Class. . ." (*Magyar Nemzet*, August 24), or "Excuse the Citizen for Interfering. . ." (*Független Magyarország*, August 25), the opinion of anti-German middle-class groups of democratic sentiments gained expression. In the September 4 issue of *Újság*, a journalist of the Smallholders Party, Sándor Barcs, argued that the unity of workers, peasants and the bourgeoisie was an historical necessity without which "the idea of Hungarian democracy would forever remain an empty slogan". In the same paper communist Lajos Fehér reported that a "process of disillusionment" and "awakening" had begun within the bourgeoisie.

The National Youth Committee urged the union of those young people who, "due to their economic and political interests, got closer to the working class". Working youth offered a hand to all who "would join them in a unity answering the demands of the era", putting aside all former prejudices and distrust.

As the debate progressed, theoretical issues gave way to problems of action, practical tasks and the establishment of genuine unity. In the August 17 issue of *Népszava*, József Darvas is already urging common "stout work counting with everyday life". "Recruiting", an article by Imre Kovács published in *Magyar Nemzet*, reflected similar intents. Without discarding his earlier views, Imre Kovács listed such conditions of development, which essentially corresponded to the program of the HPC. "In our days, an agreement must be reached on the following three issues: *political rights, freedom and independence, land reform*. . . It would be desirable if theoretical debates at various levels would turn to these *practical* issues, and the gathering of forces *on our side* would take a *more definite shape* so that the *new political front* might be established on the first given occasion".

Until the publication of "Recruiting", the press debate was not hindered by the government or by censorship. However, the moment when a concrete plan for union appeared on the agenda, the government interfered. Press-chief Antal Ullein-Reviczky publicly reprimanded the editorial board of *Magyar Nemzet*, and warned to ban the paper if similar articles were to be published.

Népszava's answer to "Recruiting" already bore the impact of government interference. The editorial board responded to the article favourably, and emphasized that the months-long press debate has yielded "clear and well-oriented ideas". However, they considered the unity of will so obviously present in the press debate only a "reserve of power" warning the government to reckon with the masses. They did not consider it timely to organize the anti-fascist forces. "These days are not suitable. . . for large-scale organizations"—they wrote.

Workers responded to the press debate enthusiastically, lively, but that alone would not satisfy the Communist Party which wanted the working class to

understand and support its policy, to become the prime mover, the leading force of the struggle for independence. The leadership of the HPC made serious efforts to make communists identify themselves with the policy of the party, and become its firm advocates. They expounded the essence of the popular-front policy in the form of drafts, discussions and seminars held in party organizations and at illegal meetings. Most debates focused on the issue of cooperation with the bourgeoisie, i.e. with a part of the ruling classes. The "exaggerated" propagation of national traditions, the 1848-49 War of Independence, its leaders, Petőfi and Kossuth, and especially the national flag and other national symbols, and the national anthem all caused problems. Some communists considered cooperation with the bourgeoisie, i.e. the resuscitation of the democratic revolutionary traditions, a renouncement to class struggle and proletarian internationalism.

These mistaken views prevailed among the organized social democratic workers as well, for the right-wing social democrats attacked the policy of the HPC by using false left-wing phraseology. They repeatedly explained that communists had left the path of class struggle, they had abdicated socialism; and, obviously, social democrats could not support such a policy. "Unfortunately, part of our leadership has failed to understand our new conception", Árpád Szakasits wrote in one of his works. "Violent debates broke out within the leadership itself and in some of the local branches, too. Strangely enough, the Right now used radicalism as its disguise... They reproached us for leaving the path of traditions and class struggle."

Among the most ardent advocates of the above views we find various factions of the working-class movement, too. Most dangerous of all was the Demény faction which pretended to act in the name of the Communist Party and was active in the large factories of the major workers districts: Csepel, Pesterzsébet, Kőbánya and Kispest. In their opinion, the policy of independence and national unity reflected an opportunist standpoint, the betrayal of the workers' interests and a pact with the bourgeoisie. They opposed cooperation with the Social Democratic Party and believed that the immediate task of the working class was to realize the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, their demands, seemingly more radical than those of the HPC, were accompanied by the checking of all active, anti-war working class action. These pseudo-left-wing views did have a strong impact on the workers, and, therefore, great efforts were needed to overcome them.

Besides theoretical debates, the communists strove to prove by concrete action, too, that the independence movement did not hinder the revolutionary struggle of the working class, but, on the contrary, promoted it. They gave convincing proof that the policy advocated by the right-wing social democrats and the "left-wing" factions was only seemingly radical, while in reality it disregarded historical circumstances and hampered the fight for withdrawal from the war, the elimination of fascism, and the complete liberation of the working class and the nation.

At the weekly meetings of the local chairmen and secretaries of the SDP, the communists working as SDP secretaries, and ever more frequently, the left-wing social democratic functionaries and secretaries as well, expressed their firm support

for the policy of national union and independence, referring to the international experiences of the resistance movement, the development of cooperation between the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States, and to the establishment of an anti-fascist world coalition.

They also pointed to the fact that the unfolding of the anti-fascist world coalition would strengthen the anti-Bárdossy group of the Hungarian ruling classes, and stressed that discrepancies within the ruling classes, perhaps even within the government itself, might offer advantageous conditions for the struggle for independence.

The HPC firmly believed that the SDP and the trade unions would not be able to survive by passive resistance, only by active political struggle. They emphasized that in case the organized workers were forced into complete passivity, the workers' organizations would dissolve and become deserted, whereas active struggle would surely impart them a new impetus. The Party of Communists set up a special committee to mobilize the unorganized workers and those who had left the trade unions. The committee espoused all initiatives promoting the activity of the trade unions. In letters addressed to public personalities, the committee called for protection for both the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions.

After the short recession period following the declaration of war, actions launched in order to improve the living conditions and the food supply of the workers and to curb high prices helped a lot to enliven the activity of the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions. The general assemblies of construction, textile industrial, engineering, leather industrial and other trade unions held in Autumn 1941 dealt with the improvement of the living conditions of the working class, the increase of food rations and the assurance of factory supplies. Moreover, they demanded that public supply decrees be kept, requested the most widespread implementation of government measures concerning supplies for war factories, and took the lead in demanding the re-establishment of 8-hour work-days and paid holidays.

The communists, in concert with left-wing trade union leaders, suggested that complaint committees be set up in each factory and trade union to listen to the workers' complaints and find remedies. In several trade unions, these complaint committees were actually founded and, in turn, stimulated actions in factories; more than once, demands of whole trades were submitted to the entrepreneurs and the authorities. They launched a struggle against the system of military direction in factories, aimed, first of all, at removing the most extremist and brutal factory commanders. This movement compelled right-wing social democrats to retreat. Communists also considered it their common task to help the families of those trade union members who had to join the army. The joint action resulted in special allowances given to soldiers' families on one or more occasions in most factories. An especially eloquent example of the unity between communist and social democratic workers was that each trade union set up a relief fund to help the families of interned communists and social democrats.

An outstanding event of the struggle for the unity of action of the working class was the discussion held by the left wing leader of SDP, Árpád Szakasits, and the delegates of the HPC Central Committee in Autumn 1941 (September-October). Cooperation between social democrats and communists, and the strive for unity coming from below, increased immensely. Left-wing lower and middle-level functionaries and certain comrades in the top leadership—Árpád Szakasits, György Marosán (General Secretary of the Bakers' Union), Sándor Rónai (Party Secretary at Miskolc), Miklós Somogyi (Chairman of the Construction Workers' Union), and others—proved their willingness to support the independence movement; they were even striving to cooperate with the communists.

The position of the Communist Party and its tasks were discussed repeatedly at several meetings. The communists considered it essential to intensify the cooperation of the two parties, make the best of the advantages of legality, and increase the role of the working class and the anti-fascist movement. They also suggested that the SDP make better use of its established relations with the bourgeois parties, and ensure wider possibilities for propagating independence policy in *Népszava*. They also pointed to the necessity of organizing active anti-war actions.

Despite their differences of view concerning important issues, Árpád Szakasits agreed with the policy of the Communist Party, and assured the Central Committee that he would support the independence movement. However, he held his reservations concerning direct anti-war actions, being anxious for the legality of the Social Democratic Party, the trade unions, and *Népszava*. He also pointed out how "certain right-wing social democratic leaders condemned him in a provocative manner and attacked such endeavours". Even if the results of the negotiations fell behind the expectations, the establishment of the relationship itself was a milestone in the development of cooperation between communists and social democrats.

Parallel with the talks, the first anti-war actions were organized. As for the actions, the party wanted that both the number and the composition of the demonstrators indicate the anti-fascist and anti-war nature of the manifestations and the fact that they were supported by broad masses of society.

The first demonstration took place at the Memorial Lamp of Batthyány, the Prime Minister executed in 1849, on October 6, 1941, the memorial day of the martyrs of the 1848–49 War of Independence. The demonstration, attended by 200–300 young workers, was led by Endre Ságvári, Secretary of the National Youth Committee. The first demonstration met with a much greater response than expected. On the following day, both *Népszava* and *Magyar Nemzet* spoke highly of the brave action of the youth. The Arrow Cross press, on the other hand, tolled the alarm-bell and branded the "red Independent Hungary movement" as high treason.

After the success of the first demonstration, the Communist Party decided to organize another anti-war demonstration on November 1st, under legal circumstances, if possible, at the burial place of the two great figures of the 1848–49 War of Independence, Lajos Kossuth and Mihály Táncsics. The party ordered local

branches and communists working in the NYC to mobilize the workers. They also established contacts with leading intellectuals sympathizing with the independence movement, whom they asked to attend the demonstration. During the preparations they put to use a former permission of the Minister of Home Affairs permitting the SDP to lay wreaths on the grave of the great martyrs of the labour movement, the only reservation being that wreaths or ribbons must not be red. Thus, organized workers could be mobilized legally, although SDP leaders had not thought of organizing such a ceremony at the Kossuth Mausoleum.

On November 1st, *Magyar Nemzet* called on all those living in the capital with democratic sentiments to attend the solemn wreath-laying ceremony at the graves of Kossuth and Táncsics. In the afternoon of November 1st, thousands of people—mostly organized workers, young workers, and university students—gathered at the Kossuth Mausoleum. From among the leaders of the Social Democratic Party, Árpád Szakasits, Anna Kéthly and József Büchler were present. *Szabad Szó* delegated József Darvas and Imre Kovács, *Magyar Nemzet* István Barankovics, the Smallholders Party and *Kis Újság* Gyula Dessewffy. The demonstration was also attended by poets, writers, journalists and artists, thus, for instance, by Gyula Illyés, Béla Horváth, Zoltán Szabó, Gyula Ortutay, Elek Erdődy, Pál Simándy, Gábor Tolnai, Miklós Radnóti, György Markos, Ferenc Földes, and Ferenc Hont.

Wreaths were sent by various youth organizations, by the young workers of Csepel, by peasant colleges, and university student groups (e.g. the Széchenyi Fraternal Society and students of the Bolyai College), by the Association of Hungarian Writers and Research Workers and the NYC. During the ceremony a part of the mass cheered for independent Hungary.

This demonstration proved that, after so much propaganda and press debate activity, the independence movement had reached the stage of organized action. The demonstration corroborated the conviction of the HPC that the conditions necessary for the joint actions of social strata of various political convictions were maturing.

A new press debate was triggered by the open manifestation of the independence movement. Besides *Népszava*, *Szabad Szó*, and *Magyar Nemzet*, *Független Magyarország* and even Károly Rassay's bourgeois-oriented *Esti Kurír* (Evening Courier) reported on the significant event. The Arrow Cross press and the Right demanded a ban on "organization by the popular front", and urged police action against those who had attended the demonstration. Besides the ferocious threats, their primary aim was to estrange the various trends of the independence movement just about to develop.

However, the press storm following the demonstration favoured the independence movement. Members of the Arrow Cross unintentionally drew public attention to the demonstration: hundreds of thousands of people came to realize that in Hungary there existed forces capable of organized protest against the war and alliance with Nazi Germany.

The achievements of the independence movement made it even more urgent to contact the peasants. Anti-fascist, anti-German representatives of the peasantry

had proved many a times both in the press and in the course of political debates and lectures that they approved of the idea of cooperation with the working class, and supported the independence movement. This, however, was no more sufficient: the active mobilization of the peasant masses had to be achieved. Therefore, a way had to be found to the peasant organizations, and to the peasantry itself. In view of the brutal terror in the villages, and the special government measures, this seemed an almost inextricable task. Former left-wing peasant organizations had been disbanded or atrophied. The illegal peasant organizations of the HPC had been destroyed already as early as 1935. The local branches of the Independent Smallholders Party, the Social Democratic Federation of Navvies, and the various peasant societies and readers' circles all met with the same fate; nor could the National Peasant Party build up its organs.

After the declaration of war, the democratic forces maintained contacts with toiling peasantry primarily through the National Youth Committee and the readers' circles of *Szabad Szó*. An exceptionally important means of personal contact was provided by the readers' conferences organized from time to time at the editorial board of *Szabad Szó* and attended by the paper's rural readers, mainly correspondents. Local groups of construction workers also helped to establish relations. Although the communists tried to make the best of these opportunities, they were far from enough to mobilize the entire peasantry.

The autumn of 1941 brought a new promising opportunity: *Magyar Parasztövetség* (Hungarian Peasant League) was founded. The chairman of the federation was Ferenc Nagy, an MP of the Smallholders Party, and its secretary, Béla Kovács, was also a member of the party. The organization had a double aim. On the one hand, they wanted to further weaken the already shaken Arrow Cross positions in the countryside, and, on the other, they wanted to assemble the unorganized peasants—disappointed by the Arrow Cross movement, and searching for a way to follow—into an organization led by wealthy peasants that would be capable of limiting the obstacles in the way of both the democratic endeavours of the peasantry and its cooperation with the working class.

At the statutory meeting, Ferenc Nagy stated: "our organization does not aim at class organization, but wants to ensure the smooth class-formation of the peasantry that would allow its self-consciousness to develop properly instead of becoming a destructive force." "We do not make a political issue of the land question"—he emphasized, and made it clear that the leaders of the Peasant League would not include the main demand of the peasants, i.e. the liquidation of the large estates and land reform, in their program.

Wealthy peasants warmly welcomed the formation of the Peasant League, but smallholders, and especially poor peasants saw it as just another way of bluffing the peasants, and did not want to support the League. However, the communists and the democrats among the peasantry justly recognized that a clever policy might turn the League into the basis of the independence movement. Therefore, they did their utmost to make as many peasants join the federation as possible, and use it as a forum for their demands. *Szabad Szó* helped resolve the doubts of the peasants with

its articles. Even Imre Kovács, opposing the idea of peasant unity a year before, stated that poor peasants should join the League.

In Spring 1942, it was decided at a *Szabad Szó* correspondent-conference that a special Navvies' Section should be set up within the Peasant League to represent the interests of the poor peasantry. Whether the Right (still dominant in the League and enjoying government support), or the Left (fighting for the interests of the peasantry, mainly of the agrarian proletariat) were to gain the upper hand within the League still depended on the further achievements of the anti-fascist forces.

II.3. Formation of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee and the Demonstration on March 15, 1942

As a result of the events of end-1941, the country was more tightly chained to the cart of Hitlerite fascism than ever before, and the temporarily smoothed contradictions within the Hungarian ruling classes busy with chasing the rainbow of the *Blitzkrieg* reemerged. In November 1941, on the 5th anniversary of the Anti-Comintern Pact, in Berlin, parallel with the prolongation of the agreement for another 5-year period, the Germans informed their henchmen that the Pact and the Tripartite Pact were aimed not only against the Soviet Union, but against its allies as well. A few days later, on December 7, London declared war on Hungary, and the British dominions followed suite. War broke out between Japan and the United States on December 8. Germany and Italy immediately declared war on the United States; Bárdossy broke off diplomatic relations with the USA on December 11, then on December 12 he told the American Ambassador that Hungary considered itself at war with the United States. The public could hardly wake up from these surprises when the news arrived that the German troops had suffered defeat under Moscow. This made the legend of the invincibility of the German army and the *Blitzkrieg* vanish. Horthy and the government used the news of the initial successes of the Japanese manoeuvres to divert attention from the events on the Soviet-German front. However, the truth was difficult to hide.

Obviously, the above events favoured the independence movement. The defeat under Moscow strengthened the anti-war sentiment of the organized workers and the influence of extreme-right movements decreased. The news of the victory gained by the Soviet troops encouraged the workers to take a more definite stand in defending their political and social rights. Fruitful cooperation between the communist and social democratic masses and the left-wing functionaries was further strengthened by the initial successes of the independence movement, and the favourable changes of the international situation.

The right wing of the Social Democratic Party was also influenced by the events. They tended to overestimate the changes taking place on the international scene, and expected a rapid German defeat. From this, however, they did not draw the conclusion that resistance had to be intensified but propagated strength-gathering instead. In view of the defeat, and expecting German pressure, they wanted more

than ever to maintain their "wait-and-see" policy. At the same time, the sympathy of certain government members towards the unfolding independence movement, the fact that they repeatedly advocated the legality of socialist workers organizations, and the increasing interest of the middle strata concerning the popular-front endeavours of the working class, all urged the Peyer leadership to adopt a more tolerant attitude towards the anti-fascist movement in the SDP and in the trade unions.

The fiasco of the *Blitzkrieg* against the Soviet Union, the declaration of war against the Western powers, and finally the failure of any further revisionist claims expected in return for Hungary's participation in the war, increased dissatisfaction in the pro-Western circles of the ruling classes standing behind István Bethlen and Keresztes-Fischer. Many thought that the war declaration against the United States was a mistake; some of them—like Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky—believed that the defeat of Nazi Germany was very near.

In the autumn of 1941, certain representatives of the Western-orientated wing of the bourgeoisie—primarily the followers of Sándor Pethő, the groups centring around the *Magyar Nemzet*, those surrounding the anti-German, but definitely anti-democratic *Törzsökös Magyarok Egyesülete* (Federation of True-born Hungarians), and certain leaders of the Smallholders Party—stated ever more frequently that they opposed unconditional pro-German policy and the endeavours of the extreme Right leading to the devastation of the country. These groups, later becoming the backbone of the bourgeois wing of the independence movement, were the first to discover in the working classes, primarily in the workers, a force which might help them out of the crisis. That is the reason why these anti-Hitlerite bourgeois and middle-class elements turned towards the independence movement.

Heightened interest in the various anti-fascist cultural programs also reflected the growing sympathy felt towards the independence movement. The Group of Socialist Artists working within the SDP mounted an exhibition of the best paintings and statues of its members. The exhibition itself scored great success and was the spur of a press debate launched under the title "Arts and the Working Class" involving several artists and art fans. Most important of the cultural demonstrations was a series of performances entitled "The Poet and His Age" arranged by communist Ferenc Hont. The popularity of these programs had an extremely positive effect on workers' cultural groups as well. In their programs they included performances which attempted to invoke in the masses the idea of anti-German struggle, national union, and Hungary's independence.

One of the most successful actions of the independence movement was the 1941 Christmas issue of *Népszava*. At end-November 1941, the Central Committee of the HPC and the left wing of the SDP felt it was time they brought together political forces of different opinions but ready to fight for the country's independence, so that they might express their views together before a large audience. In their opinion, the situation required that the strength of anti-Hitlerite forces, and primarily the political weight of the working class be demonstrated, and the conditions for the organized cooperation of anti-fascist forces opposed to Hitler be

created. The role *Népszava* had previously played in the independence movement, its growing authority in the eyes of the middle strata and the anti-Hitlerite bourgeois groups, and its staff of communists and left-wing social democrats all guaranteed the success of the mission.

Editor-in-chief Árpád Szakasits together with Gyula Kállai played a major role in the creation of the Christmas issue, but the implementation of the plan reflected the joint effort of the whole editorial board. The Peyerist wing of the SDP did not approve the idea, and rallied a host of arguments against it. Their main objection was that such an issue would mean giving up the traditions of *Népszava*. But, after all, they granted permission for its preparation, hoping that the refusal of the bourgeois politicians who had been asked to participate and the interference of censorship would wreck the large-scale action of communists and leftists. However, finally, the initiative has succeeded.

The whole Christmas supplement of *Népszava* was devoted to two issues: cooperation of the national forces and national independence. Its objective was outlined in the editorial written by Árpád Szakasits: "We have invited politicians, writers, philosophers, people who . . . genuinely want our country to be and remain independent, to live its life in independence, and to map out the way it is to follow independently."

The message of the issue centred around three major subjects: a) freedom and politics; b) freedom and the arts; c) freedom and the people. Virtually all the major representatives of the anti-German and anti-fascist trend expressed their views. Communists were represented by István Dési Huber, Ferenc Földes, Gyula Kállai, András Kasztel, György Markos and Aladár Mód; left-wing social democrats by Lajos Gosztönyi, Lajos Jordáky, Árpád Szakasits and Mihály Földes. There were a few articles written by social democrats belonging to the right wing, but sympathizing with the independence movement (Mihály Révész, József Takács and Dániel Várnai). The radical representatives of the peasantry such as József Darvas, for instance, also participated. Hungarian intellectuals, such as Marcell Benedek (literary man and aesthete) and Zsigmond Móricz (writer) also contributed to the issue, together with Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, ex-founder of the party of racists and Gyula Szekfű, the founding father of the comparative study of Hungarian history of ideas.

One of the main objectives of the Christmas issue was to call attention to the dangers of waging war on the side of Hitlerite fascism; to show that the protection of independence is one and the same with a break with fascist Germany and withdrawal from the war. Drawing a lesson from the century-long struggle for national sovereignty and independence, it emphasized the possibility and the necessity of turning against Hitler. It pointed to the fact that the success or doom of the hundred-year-long independence struggle had always depended on establishing national unity against internal reaction allied to *foreign conquerors*, on the degree to which the working masses, forming the basis of any struggle for freedom, identified themselves with the struggle, i.e. the extent to which they felt it would serve their elevation, and the realization of their work and social demands. Elaborating

on the topic of the history of the Hungarian struggles for freedom, they also emphasized that the protection of independence could not be separated from the democratic transformation of the country. The Christmas issue also raised the idea that the struggle for independence implied friendly cooperation with the neighbouring peoples.

Virtually all the authors agreed that all strength had to be gathered to avert the catastrophe lurking over the country: "... we live in a storm ... we have to agree on certain essential issues, for devastation comes easier if we are alone, separated from each other, than in case many people, very many people, understand each other". This is how Gyula Szekfű expressed the necessity of unity, adding: "I think we do agree on the issue of freedom, even if our points of departure may differ ..."

The Christmas issue was extremely significant, because anti-Hitlerite forces appeared before the public, and what is more, they did so in the newspaper of the working class. By expressing their concern over the nation's future, and the necessity of unity in *Népszava*, the representatives of the various strata of the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia, coming from afar, tacitly acknowledged the decisive role the working class was to play in the independence movement. The Christmas issue reflected that there existed a unity of action between communists and left-wing social democrats, and the nation-wide reaction to it suddenly increased their political weight and influence.

The release of the Christmas issue was followed by a "press storm" lasting for several weeks, and there were sharp debates within the trade unions, in the SDP organizations, and among the communists, too. The extreme Right launched an angry attack against *Népszava's* so-called "popular-front conference". They recognized the connection between the autumn actions and the Christmas issue, and were fully aware of the fact that "friendship behind the scenes" was replaced by "the open manifestation of comrades-in-arms". When the extreme Right had to face the fact that its attacks had no effect and *Népszava* bravely stood barrage opened at them, they changed tactics. They wanted to persuade the government to bring *Népszava* to its heel, and strove by all means to isolate the representatives of the middle strata and the bourgeoisie from the working class. Therefore, they primarily attacked "guest writers" like Szekfű, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and Móricz.

However, their plan failed. Although Szekfű did not answer the attacks, his later behaviour clearly showed that he would not obey. Catholic poet Béla Horváth (in *Esti Kurír*) and Bajcsy-Zsilinszky (in *Magyar Nemzet*) bravely took the side of cooperation with the working class. The latter emphasized that the questions propounded in the Christmas issue were of a "universal significance", and stated that "... Hungarian workers ... clearly see the great national tasks lying ahead, and understand the call of the times ...".

The Christmas issue managed to bring into the independence movement people who, in the autumn of 1941, had still excluded the working class from the unity of anti-Hitlerite forces. The most significant fact was the adherence of Aladár baráti Huszár, President of both OTI (*Országos Társadalombiztosítási Intézet*, National Social Insurance Institute) and the above-mentioned Federation of True-born

Hungarians. Journalist István Lendvai who used to attack the labour movement from a petty-bourgeois position now praised the brave tone of the Christmas issue in several articles, and welcomed the fact that the workers and the middle strata succeeded in getting closer to each other. A great number of brave appreciations and letters sided with the ideas propagated in the Christmas issue.

The attacks of the Arrow Cross and the severe reproof of right-wing social democrats first hindered the workers' recognition of the true significance of the issue. Even some of the communist functionaries disapproved of cooperation with Szekfű and Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, because they saw it as the abandonment of the interests of the working class and the rejection of the policy of class struggle. But the letters flooding into the editor's office took the side of the Christmas issue, and assured the paper of their support. The letters urged the editorial office to maintain the same spirit in the paper, and encouraged the SDP to translate the ideas meeting with general approval into practice.

The Central Committee of the HPC thought that the conditions had ripened: the "movement launched for freedom and independence" could be turned into a *national* mass movement influencing government policy as well. The time had come to establish a political organization uniting all anti-fascist, anti-Hitlerite forces, and to organize a large-scale demonstration against the war. The accomplishment of this task demanded further efforts from the party, first of all an increase of its organizational strength.

By the beginning of 1942, HPC cells had been formed within the various legal workers' organizations, in the left-wing press and in cultural organizations having a primary importance in organization. The most important task then was to increase the membership of the party organizations, to augment their efficiency and self-reliance, and to improve the implementation of party policy: sympathizers, candidates and young workers were organized into groups disseminating pamphlets, painting slogans on walls, and spreading "lollipops" with slogans. However, there were still some fields of outstanding importance for anti-war struggle, and especially a large proportion of those working at large factories servicing the war machinery, that fell outside the range and influence of not only the HPC, but even the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions.

This had several causes. The SDP and the trade unions recruited the bulk of their members from among the workers of small and medium-size factories, and only partly from large ones. In large factories, heavy terror was weighed on any kind of organizational activity, and there were some which organized workers could hardly penetrate at all. Therefore, the workers of the large factories were, as a rule, less organized than would have been warranted by their relative proportion to all the workers. In the first half of 1942, the *Szakszervezeti Tanács* (Trade Union Council) registered approximately 70-80 000 trade union members, i.e. some 7-8% of all workers. In 1936-38, there were some 120 000 members; that meant 15-20% of all workers. After the introduction of military direction in war factories in 1939, a chase was launched for the organized workers, who were thus forced to choose between factory and trade union. The new giant war factories would employ

organized workers only in the extreme. In 1942, official statistics stated 450 000 large-factory workers, but the number of organized workers was only 25 000 there, i.e. 5.5% of all the workers employed in large-scale industry. This means that while in 1942 only every twentieth worker was organized, in 1936 every tenth worker had been an organized one.

Although organization level no doubt greatly influenced the political stance of the workers of the large factories, that was not the sole factor. Owing to the war boom, these factories could grant more advantageous wages and social endowments than the smaller ones. After the declaration of war, the owners of certain big factories (themselves MPs addressing Parliament) learning the lesson of World War I experience felt that internal order could not be maintained and the continuity of war production could not be assured unless, beside the terror, the workers of the war factories would be supplied "as well as possible". A decree issued by the Ministry of Defence on September 12, 1941 declared that the primary task of all commissioners for public supply was "to pay constant attention" to the food provisions of the war factories; they had to guarantee that "there would be no disturbance in the provision of war factories". Indeed, in the second half of 1941 and in the first half of 1942, there was no serious hindrance in this field.

The resolution of the Central Committee of the HPC on starting organization work and increasing their activity in the factories was aimed first and foremost at gaining the main "squad" of the proletariat, the workers of the large factories, for the cause of anti-fascist, anti-war struggle. One must remember that in 1941 the successful actions had been carried out practically without the support of these workers. Besides the large factories, the party considered it important to start organization in the countryside, too. Organized activity began in several provincial towns (Pécs, Debrecen, Szeged), in communities of the "Stormy Corner" of the country (in Békés and Csongrád counties), in Southern Slovakia and in Northern Transylvania, partly with the help of the National Youth Committee and partly by using other means.

Greater tasks made it urgent to organize the regular information of communists; the formulation of a unanimous communist standpoint concerning the most important theoretical issues, the occasional circulars, the communist articles published in the legal press, mainly in *Népszava*, and the discussions held in the various party organizations were no longer enough. That is why the Central Committee of the HPC decided to issue a party paper to inform the communists regularly, and to clarify the most important *theoretical* and practical problems of the independence movement. The Central Committee entrusted Ferenc Rózsa, its secretary, to edit the central organ of the party. The illegal *Szabad Nép* (Free People) first appeared at the beginning of February, 1942.

As shown by the editorial defining its program, *Szabad Nép* considered it its main task to assist in the ideological and organizational development of the party, thus making it capable of organizing and leading the independence movement. The central paper of the party analyzed national unity many-sidedly. It had convincing arguments to prove that only the union of working class, the peasantry and the anti-

fascist bourgeoisie could lead to a break with Hitler, to peace with the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States, and thus to the democratic transformation of Hungary. The paper considered it most important to make the working class understand the close relationship between anti-fascist independence struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat; anti-fascist national unity and class struggle; proletarian internationalism and true patriotism. "Freedom struggle against fascist reaction . . . is the most revolutionary policy today . . ." an article of *Szabad Nép* emphasized, "for, with the collapse of a bastion of world reaction, we strike a blow at the whole, and thus shorten the road towards the entire liberation of the working class." The independence movement does not only strive to throw off the Nazi yoke but, "... together with the German oppression, it also eliminates its internal supporters, the rule of the reactionary circles, and thus frees the road of democratic national development which, considering the new European conditions, is equal to a relatively peaceful development towards socialism".

In order to make it easier to understand and accept the idea of national unity, the article referred to the international experiences of cooperation within the anti-fascist world coalition. The article gave a simple but clear answer to those who did not see the connections between national unity and the policy of class struggle: "... the greater the number of factories where wage fights are launched; the greater the number of factories where we demand that workers be supplied with food, clothes and items of necessity; the greater the number of districts, villages and towns where we arrange for women, mothers and delegations to demonstrate; the greater the number of districts where we demand full supply for the families of those who are on the front . . . the more frequent and the broader our anti-war actions become; the greater the pressure on the defeatist government will be, the broader the strata, peasant and bourgeois, whose struggle we shall provoke and unite with ours, the greater the proportion of the bourgeoisie, of the urban and state bureaucracy that will transmit the attacks against them towards the government; the more bread and freedom we shall have; and the broader our front will be."

The party attributed great importance to the realization of working-class unity within the camp of the independence forces. *Szabad Nép* regularly dealt with issues of the land reform, the democratic freedom rights, the democratic solution of the national issue and the ways and means of securing a separate peace treaty. A central place was given to the economic claims of the workers, which were always placed within the context of the general task, i.e. anti-war struggle. *Szabad Nép* played an invaluable role in steadying the communists' ideological perspicacity, in speeding up party organization and strengthening party discipline.

The HPC tried to strengthen its ties with left-wing leaders of the Social Democratic Party whose influence had grown significantly—especially after the Christmas issue of *Népszava*—not only within the party and the trade unions, but also in the camp of the anti-war forces. Therefore, in January 1942, the negotiations between Árpád Szakasits and Márton Horváth were renewed.

The Central Committee of the HPC urged the elaboration of a joint action program in order to further the political and economic struggle of the working class.

It also raised the issue of organizing sabotage-actions in factories. The communists suggested that the two parties should establish a joint committee authorized to pass resolutions compulsory for both parties on important issues of the independence movement.

Further results were obtained in the course of the discussions primarily in questions which had already been agreed upon during the previous negotiations (in Autumn 1941), such as greater propaganda for independence policy, a broadening of cooperation with the various anti-fascist groups, and the organization of joint economic and political actions. Árpád Szakasits, however, refuted the proposal of organizing sabotage-actions in factories and of setting up a joint committee, for fear that they might endanger the legality of the SDP and the trade unions. Instead of a joint committee, they agreed on occasional and mutual exchange of information. Although the proposal for elaborating a joint action program was not accepted, cooperation in the field of the most important economic and political issues concerning the working class became more and more fruitful. Had the left wing of the SDP been more resolute, cooperation between the two parties could have been more effective.

However, the HPC highly appreciated the achievements of the negotiations. "It is of great importance that our party and the Social Democratic Party take the same platform concerning the essential political questions: the war, the orientation of foreign policy, and democracy", *Szabad Nép* stated after the negotiations, adding immediately that "This political identity must be turned into a unity of movement, covering all the issues from the smallest to the greatest."

As a result of cooperation, organized workers unanimously and determinedly protested against the new government attacks launched against the trade unions. At end-January 1942, a resolution born from the lively debates of the meeting of shop stewards held in the Ironworkers' Union and attended by some 1500 people, unanimously refuted the draft aimed at eliminating the labour exchange right of the trade unions. The unanimous stand of the organized workers compelled Peyer and his followers to turn down the draft bill, although earlier they had embraced a rather opportunist position on this issue. The draft was similarly refuted by Christian Socialist organizations. Finally, the Minister of Home Affairs had to withdraw the draft bill.

Successful actions launched to protect the trade unions proved again that the unanimous stand of the workers strengthened the organizations and the labour right wing had been wrong to argue that these actions would lead to the banning of the trade unions. Simultaneously, communists pointed to the interrelationships of the protection of the trade unions and the strengthening of the independence movement. They emphasized that the successes of the trade unions meant successes for the independence forces as well.

The significant increase in strength of the communist and left-wing socialist masses was reflected by the all-trade union congress taking place on March 19, 1942. The resolution of the congress stated that, together with the TUC, each trade union should launch actions for wage increases, better provision for the factories, 8-hour

workdays, the re-establishment of payed holidays, and, furthermore, for the protection of the trade unions and the assurance of the right of public meeting and assembly.

At the beginning of 1942, such actions occurred primarily in smaller factories, but they spread to certain plants of a few large factories (such as the TUNGSRAM, the Weiss Manfred Factory, the Hungarian Optical Works, the Jute Factory, etc.).

External and internal political events also exerted a favourable influence on the development of the organized cooperation of anti-war forces.

By the spring of 1942, the German High Command planned an immense offensive on the Eastern Front to counterbalance its failure at Moscow and force a final decision. Besides the deployment of their own reserves, they tried to make the best possible use of all the military and economic resources of their satellites. Hungary, which until then had sacrificed the least in the military field, was all of a sudden given an important role in Hitler's plans. Hitler approved of all possible means that might "soften" the Hungarian government and gain him the entire Hungarian armed force. The Romanian and partly the Slovak fascists, who had sacrificed much more soldiers for fascist interests, demanded—not independently of the Germans—the return of territories annexed to Hungary after the Vienna decisions. Another of Hitler's means was to make use of the internal contradictions generated by the election of a vice-governor. The Governor who referred to his old age, but in reality wanted to establish the Horthy dynasty, raised his plan in November, 1941. He intended to give his duty over to his son, István Horthy. The Arrow Cross and the followers of former Prime Minister Imrédy, on the other hand, picked Archduke Albrecht, well known for his unconditional pro-German sentiments, for this post, while Acting Prime Minister Bárdossy was busy trying to arrange his own election.

In order to "soften" the Hungarian government, two high-ranking visitors arrived in Budapest in January 1942: German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop and his Italian colleague Ciano. The Hungarian government was not averse to the talks, but demanded more territories in return for the new military forces. Finally—although the Hungarian demands were not met—an agreement was reached about sending the Second Hungarian Army, some 200 000 men, to the front. To make the agreement final, Field Marshal Keitel, Chief of Staff of the German army, arrived to Budapest at end-January, 1942.

The internal political situation of the country was deeply affected by another circumstance: in January 1942, the gendarmerie and the army made a terrible bloodshed at Bácska, annexed from Yugoslavia and still under military control. The Hungarian military bodies wanted to break down the developing resistance of the subjugated Serbian population with ruthless terror. The military command tried to smother the growing partisan activity with a mass retaliation aimed at the civilian population. During the massacre, more than 6000 people were murdered and several thousands interned in the villages and towns of districts Zsablya, Titel and Újvidék; this was accompanied by acts of robbery and plunder.

The events compelled the pro-Western groups of the Hungarian ruling classes to take a definite stand against the policy of the Bárdossy government. Already on January 19, in a memorandum to Bárdossy, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky protested against meeting further German demands. He stated: "We must not bind ourselves and the fate of our nation to a corpse to rot away with it." However, the debate following the Prime Minister's report at the foreign committee session of the Lower and Upper Houses was induced not by the German demands, but by the massacre at Újvidék. The two, however, are inseparable. István Bethlen, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, Peyer and others severely condemned the policy pursued by Bárdossy. As a result, Bárdossy's position became unsteady, and after the scandal generated by the election of the vice-governor, his position as prime minister could no longer be maintained.

The crisis of the Bárdossy government created a relatively favourable situation for the further approach of anti-fascist and anti-Hitlerite forces, and the establishment of their so-called "active cooperation". Hungarians living in exile and having connections with the political circles of the United States and Britain also spurred opposition and action. In January 1942, several letters came calling the attention of some public figures to the necessity of internal resistance, and protest against the policy of the fascists and their accomplices. The Hungarian broadcast transmitted from Ankara also called upon Western-orientated people to intensify resistance.

The first attempt to create the frameworks of joint organized action was the foundation of the Attila József Memorial Committee on January 9, 1942. The task of this popular-front oriented Committee was to organize memorial evenings consecrated to the great proletarian poet, Attila József, and to undertake anti-fascist and anti-war actions. Among its members we find workers János Bartók and Lajos Cserta, journalists Zoltán Gáspár, Gyula Kállai and István Szabó, writers Dániel Hegedűs Bite and Imre Kovács. Its chairman was György Marosán, a trade union general secretary.

In the first half of February 1942, on the initiative of the Communist Party, communist, left-wing social democratic and peasant-party journalists working at *Népszava* and *Szabad Szó* suggested to establish a Historical Memorial Committee (*Történelmi Emlékbizottság*). The implementation of the plan was rendered easier by the behaviour of the pro-Western members of the government circles. Minister of Home Affairs Keresztes-Fischer, and his associates thought that the developing independence movement, provided a bourgeois leadership can be ensured, has to be supported for several reasons. On the one hand, in case the war were lost, it could represent Hungary, being an acceptable political movement in the eyes of the Western Powers, and could thus ensure the "legal continuity" of the regime. On the other hand, the movement, if kept in their hands, could act as a kind of obstacle to fascist German demands: the government could manage to reduce its economic and military obligations by referring to internal resistance. Last but not least, a movement opposed to Hitler and led by the bourgeoisie could keep the dissatisfaction of the masses which was expected to rise at a level which would not

endanger the "internal peace" of the country. Therefore, the aim of the Minister of Home Affairs was that the movement should not exceed the limits of propaganda activity, while the incidental "excesses" he believed to counterbalance by occasional warnings and the help of the bourgeois wing of the movement.

The fact that Gyula Szekfű became chairman, and that leaders of the Smallholders Party (e.g. Zoltán Tildy and Ferenc Nagy) did not refuse to participate had a great impact on those working in the preparatory phase and also on the anti-German bourgeois circles willing to join the movement. Anti-fascist journalists of *Népszava*, *Szabad Szó* and *Magyar Nemzet* used their personal contacts in order to involve politicians, writers and scientists. They sent letters to important personalities living in the countryside, for example to Noble Prize Laureate Professor Albert Szent-Györgyi, to Kálmán Molnár, a university professor at Pécs, Miklós Krenner, a writer in Transylvania and other renown public figures.

After lengthy debates, the draft of an appeal was submitted to the Minister of Home Affairs and was made public when the foundation of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee (HHMC) was announced. The draft set a dual task for the Memorial Committee: 1) the cultivation of the revolutionary traditions of the 1848-49 War of Independence, collection of the relics of the freedom struggle and the mounting of exhibitions; and 2) the establishment of an independent, free, democratic Hungary. (In the published version of the appeal only the first of the two adjectives remained.)

When the draft was being prepared, the representatives of the bourgeois wing and the Left virtually agreed to demand national sovereignty and independence, and that only cooperation with the masses of workers and peasants could give a way out. The bourgeois section feared that Hitler and the arrow-cross men would put an end to the independence of the country, but they also feared for the thousand years of Hungarian past, and the role played by the nation in Europe and above all in the Danube Basin.

Both in his article entitled "On the Path of Petőfi"—which, according to the author himself, triggered "strong reaction"—and in his response to letters provoked by the article, Gyula Szekfű emphasized that the great poet of the nation, Sándor Petőfi, appealed to everyone, irrespective of social status, despite his "strong social criticism". Szekfű found in Petőfi the idol of unity, implying that the unity of anti-Hitlerite forces must include a solution of social transformation and the related social issues. In its answer *Népszava* also approved of the idea and agreed that Petőfi symbolized the unity of national and social thought.

By early 1942, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, Szekfű and many others had come to recognize that *external* and *internal* liberation were inseparable. They realized that independence can stand on a firm basis only if it is accompanied by the internal social rise of the masses. However, the latter they interpreted otherwise than the workers. They, too, preached equal political and freedom rights and social rise, but never thought of a consistent land reform or total political emancipation. They preached the elevation of workers and peasants "to the side of the bourgeoisie", but

wanted the bourgeoisie to remain the primary possessor of power, and the social rise of the masses to be carried out without generating special burdens for the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeois wing was counting on the masses by all means, but opposed their active participation in the movement. The Communist Party, on the contrary, put the main emphasis on the active participation of the masses. After all, the issue at stake was whether the struggle against Hitler and the war would rest satisfied with half-solutions, another abortion of social rise, or whether the achievement of national independence would be coupled with social progress; in other words, whether anti-war struggle would be confined to being a good topic for the press, the various social federations, parties and coffee shops, or whether it would become a real mass movement.

Certain representatives of the bourgeois wing opposed the endeavours of the left wing of the HHMC to transform the organization gradually into a political forum including political parties and organizations. They opposed public appearance and the taking of an open stand. Instead of the anti-fascist demonstration planned for March 15, they would have preferred a ceremonial commemoration.

These circumstances forced the HPC to take an open stand, and show that the independence movement was directed by the illegal party behind it. The Central Committee wondered, however, whether it was right to appear openly before the masses at that very moment when Bárdossy's position was unsteady, and the circumstances seemed ripe for the establishment of a unity. They knew that this action would lead to the estrangement of certain individuals and even groups, to a revival of the anti-communist policy of right-wing social democrats and to the strengthening of the attacks of the organs of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Despite all this the Central Committee decided on the party's open appearance for several reasons, the most important being the wish to dissolve the anxiety of the organized workers concerning the "dubious" forces behind the independence movement. It was also necessary that the working class should recognize the real aim of the slogans spread by the sham left wing or the fascists by demagogue means, that they learn the slogans of the Communist Party, and be aware of the fact that the initiator and leader of the movement was the HPC.

After several years of silence, the first two pamphlets signed by the party performed a double task. On the one hand, they unmasked the Kassa provocation, made public the massacre at Újvidék and called attention to the fact that the mobilization and the sending to the front of the Second Hungarian Army was imminent. On the other hand, they pointed to the way out of the war and to the historic mission of the Hungarian people: "The war must be stopped! . . . We must withdraw from the Tripartite Alliance" and "join the Soviet-British-American alliance . . . following the example of 26 other nations . . ." The "shock brigades" spread the pamphlets in trade unions, and especially in workers districts in front of large factories and within the factories, if possible. For want of proper channels of communication, the party could address the workers of the large factories through these pamphlets only.

The communists urged each workers' organization, youth group and other socialist workers' organizations to join the Memorial Committee. As a result, the Youth Committee representing the various democratic youth groups and the NYC joined the Historical Memorial Committee. The *Művészek, Írók, Kutatók Szövetkezete* (Cooperative of Artists, Writers and Research Workers) followed suit. Initiatives were taken in a few trade unions, too. In the National Federation of Hungarian Construction Workers, the representatives of various trade unions held a preparatory meeting where they discussed whether to join the Memorial Committee. The *Március 15-e Állandó Bizottság* (March 15 Permanent Committee) in Northern Transylvania was also for joining.

It became ever more urgent to announce that the HHMC had been founded. However, seeing the "political interest triggered by the Committee", Minister of Home Affairs Keresztes-Fischer strove to blast it. He called on Szekfű and others to resign. The situation became less and less secure. The Central Committee of the HPC entrusted Ferenc Földes and Gyula Kállai to obtain the right to publish the joint appeal modified in the course of the discussions and approved by the Minister of Home Affairs, too.

On March 1, 1942, *Népszava* announced the foundation of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee. With Szekfű leaving, the number of signatories decreased from 51 to 28: Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, István Barankovics, Aurél Bernáth, József Darvas, Zoltán Gáspár, Aladár baráti Huszár, Gyula Illyés, Tibor Joó, Gyula Kállai, Aurél Kárpáti, János Katona, Jenő Katona, Imre Kovács, Miklós Krenner (Observer) Ernő Mihályfi, Ferenc Nagy, István Nagy, György Parragi, Pál Pátzay, István Raics, Miklós Somogyi, Árpád Szakasits, Jenő Szentimrei, István Szőnyi, Zoltán Tildy, Béla Varga, Péter Veres, Sándor Veress.

The foundation and legal status of the HHMC was an important event of the establishment of unity of anti-fascist and anti-Hitlerite forces. This was the first occasion for the various trends of the independence movement to be clustered, however loosely, in a joint organization and the first step towards the realization of the HPC's aim that the HHMC gradually develop into an alliance of political parties and organizations, into the leading body of anti-fascist independence movement.

The Memorial Committee rapidly set off on the path of action. It publicly undertook the task of organizing the anti-fascist demonstration on March 15, 1942 in memory of the 1848–49 War of Independence. Sculptor Pál Pátzay placed at the Committee's disposal his Petőfi plaque, which was casted in 30 thousand copies in a couple of days. A book entitled *Petőfi útján* (On Petőfi's Road), edited by the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee, was published. It contained articles by Gyula Szekfű, István Barankovics, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, József Darvas, Aurél Kárpáti, György Parragi, István Nagy, Árpád Szakasits, Gyula Kállai, and Imre Kovács. The collection gives a true image of the various trends of the independence movement, emphasizing the common features of the union and not the contradictions.

The main organizer of the March 15 demonstration was the HPC. The whole March issue of *Szabad Nép* was devoted to this purpose. It called attention to those features and lessons which made 1848 topical in 1942. It also explained in what way the bourgeois democratic tasks were linked with the struggle against fascism and the war, and to what extent they were parts of the further aims of the working class and the realization of socialism.

Besides the general objectives, the HPC marked out concrete tasks as well. Recognizing the growing unsteadiness of Bárdossy's position and the unfolding government crisis, the party directed its main power at the overthrow of the Bárdossy government, emphasizing that if Bárdossy remained in position, the army promised to Hitler had to be sent to the front, whereas his defeat might mean that Hitler's demands could be refused. The party was of the opinion that both the external and internal political situation of Hungary were critical, and the influence of the anti-fascist, anti-Hitlerite forces on the masses grew to such an extent that they were able to have a say in solving the government crisis; the conditions for establishing a government supported by the entire nation have ripened.

The party judged correctly that the tasks ahead of the independence movement could only be implemented by a national government that could identify itself with the universal interests of the nation, and was right to emphasize that the slogan "Down with the Bárdossy government" would make full sense only if it was clarified what exactly the anti-fascist, anti-Hitlerite camp wanted instead of the fascist government. However, in the spring of 1942, the conception that the time had come to set up an anti-fascist national government replacing the Bárdossy government was still unrealistic. No such results could be expected from the demonstration on March 15, 1942.

The organization of the demonstration began in SDP branches, in trade unions, among the youth, and in all the fields where the HPC had organizations or contacts. By this time, communist groups had existed in virtually all the workers organization. The communists and left-wing social democrats did not only mobilize the masses for the March demonstration, but carried out widespread propaganda to wear the Petőfi badge. Badges were sold by the hundred in factories, trade unions and even in Christian Socialist organizations. To wear a Petőfi badge in the street was not only a brave deed, not only did it provoke a series of insults, but it also meant open support to the case of an independent, free, and democratic Hungary.

Radio Kossuth also joined in the preparatory works of the March demonstration. Its programs, launched by Hungarian communists living in the Soviet Union and supported by the Comintern and the Soviet government, began in September 1941. The editorial staff comprised Mátyás Rákosi, József Révai, Ernő Gerő, Mihály Farkas, and later Imre Nagy, Sándor Nógrádi, István Friss, Zoltán Szántó, Andor Gábor. The Radio paid continuous attention to events taking place in Hungary and reacted immediately. It repeatedly emphasized the grave responsibility of the Hungarian ruling classes for being involved in the anti-Soviet war, urged anti-fascist unity and the creation of an independence front. The

directives, advices, appeals for strikes and sabotage actions broadcast by the radio gave significant help to the unfolding independence movement.

From mid-February 1942, Radio Kossuth repeatedly called on its audience to celebrate the anniversary of 1848 befittingly, emphasizing that the 15th of March "had to be transformed into a militant day of the national opposition, a rally of patriotic Hungarians. . . . Let us make of March 15 the day of saving our army. . . . *the time has come to act*. Let the Hungarian people go out into the streets in every town and village, organize massive street demonstrations so that the army remain at home"—the March 7 broadcast of Radio Kossuth urged. It also called upon the organized workers to take a decisive role in the preparations and participate in the demonstration. "This year again, on March 15, the knowledge that national and workers' aims coincide, the national sense of vocation inextinguishable in all Hungarian workers calls tens of thousands of organized workers, the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions into the streets".

The majority of organized workers did recognize the significance of the March 15 demonstration, and they were busy preparing for it. In the leadership of the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions there were sharp debates over attending the demonstration. Right-wing social democrats opposed it from the beginning, but they also opposed the participation of their party leaders in the HHMC. It is no accident that there were no right-wing social democrats among the signatories of either the draft or the appeal: they were increasingly anxious about the left-wing activity carried out in their party and the trade union organizations. Their concern was further increased by the ever more frequent warnings of the Minister of Home Affairs.

After the pamphlets of the Communist Party had appeared in February, "church bells were tolled". *Népszava* warned the organized workers several times "not to accept illegal pamphlets" and "not even to tolerate their distribution". They were ordered to hinder the smuggling of such documents into factories, workers' homes or trade union premises. "Whoever is caught smuggling or distributing illegal, provocative pamphlets is to be ruthlessly handed over to the authorities". There were other attempts, too, to avert workers from preparing for the demonstration. The old sham-left-wing cliché was produced again: "We cannot march under a red-white-green (i.e. national—I.P.) flag."

Under the pressure of the organized workers, the support of General Secretary Árpád Szakasits and left-wing functionaries, the right-wing leaders had to beat a temporary retreat. The leadership of the SDP passed a resolution in which it approved of the organization of the March 15 demonstration on Petőfi Square. The decision was announced publicly, too, at the chairman-secretary meeting on March 9th.

After the resolution, legal preparations began. Communists and left-wing social democratic leaders agreed that the workers should gather in the trade unions or the district branches of the SDP, and march in close order to the statue of Petőfi. The workers of a plant or a trade union bought wreaths from joint donations and made

transparents. Small speech choirs were set up to proclaim the slogans of the HPC and create the atmosphere of the demonstration. A resolution was passed according to which wreaths were to be placed on the memorials of the 1848 War of Independence in every district.

After the announcement of the SDP, on March 11, the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee also stated publicly that it planned a quiet demonstration at the Petőfi statue on March 15. The HPC, however, wanted to turn the demonstration into loud protest against the war and Hitler. Preparations were going on in this atmosphere. Cultural programs also played an important part in the preparations. The second series of performances organized by the Cooperative of Artists, Writers and Research Workers was already aimed at agitating for practical struggle.

Right-wing reaction did its utmost to torpedo the programs. They carried out sharp attacks against the excellent actors contributing to the cultural programs. Certain theatres forbid their actors to participate. Parallel with these programs, the right wing also arranged literary evenings to avert the attention of the audience from the programs of the democratic forces. However, their plans failed again, as the cultural evenings stood out from all similar programs, not only because of their high quality and content, but also because of the large number of the audience and their impact on the masses. Ferenc Hont, the director of the programs wrote: "The audience just flew in to these performances". The greatest success was the program organized on the eve of March 15, whose title indicated its aim "Rise, Hungarian!" (referring to the famous poem by Petőfi written in 1848). The whole program was devoted to the spirit of Petőfi and the 1848–49 War of Independence.

The publication of an anthology entitled *March* by socialist writers and poets was also part of the preparations for the festive proceedings. The anthology included studies by Imre Kovács, Gyula László, Imre Lukács, Aladár Mód, István Nagy, Imre Révész, Ede Zsigmond; short stories by János Földeák, Lajos Kassák, István Nagy, Ferenc Vaád; and poems by László Benjámín, István Berényi, János Földeák, László Hárs, Zoltán Keszthelyi, Ferenc Kis, Béla Mária, Károly Rajcsányi, Ferenc Salamon, György Szűdi, Mihály Vető, Zoltán Zelk.

The *Szocialista Képzőművészek Csoportja* (Group of Socialist Artists) wanted to link the substantial, several-months-long debate on fine arts to the March events. They decided to mount an exhibition in March under the title "The Freedom of Arts" and invite "all the independent Hungarian artists, wherever they belong otherwise." Within the framework of the exhibition a fresco contest was organized under the title "Freedom and the People". A show was also arranged from the best photos of amateur worker photographers.

The change of government that was in the air first influenced the preparations favourably. Several bourgeois politicians, members of the HHMC and even those who had refused to sign the appeal, were caught up in the wave of enthusiasm generated by the preparations among the workers.

But reaction did not sleep either.

It is no accident that the Governor—on the advice of the Minister of Home Affairs and the pro-Western groups—chose this very period for solving the smouldering government crisis. Although Bárdossy's fall was *not a result of quickly developing independence movement, the timing of the solution of the government crisis was by no means independent of it.*

By March 4 news that the Governor was conferring about the appointment of a new Prime Minister and a reshuffle of the cabinet had already leaked out. On March 7 Bárdossy handed in his resignation referring to his "broken health", and on March 9 Horthy appointed Miklós Kállay Prime Minister. However, the change was announced in the papers only on March 11. The news of the reshuffle, and especially of the person of the new Prime Minister strongly influenced the planned demonstration. Since Miklós Kállay belonged to the Bethlen group, the masses, especially the petit-bourgeois layers, right-wing social democrats, and the bourgeois wing of the independence movement expected him to break with the line pursued by Bárdossy, to return gradually to the more moderate line represented by Count Bethlen or Pál Teleki, and to break with the unconditional pro-German policy.

The masses approving of the downfall of the Bárdossy government were, to a certain extent, looking forward to the introduction and politics of the new Prime Minister. The fact that Kállay took over the Bárdossy cabinet was explained by momentary necessity. The first reactions of *Népszava* and the left-wing papers supported the same illusion. This atmosphere of expectation weakened the opposition of the masses. News spread that "Prime Minister Kállay will not fulfil the commitments Prime Minister Bárdossy had undertaken for the Germans."

The above change encouraged further actions on the part of the right-wing social democrats opposing the demonstration. They were striving to change the resolution adopted on March 9. The first obvious sign of this was that *Népszava* did not announce the appeal of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee for the March 15 demonstration. On March 13, *Népszava* already wrote that it was impossible to celebrate in the usual way, that is by marching up to the statue of Petőfi. The same day the Minister of Home Affairs called Károly Peyer and later Árpád Szakasits, warning them that "right-wing provocation" could be expected at the demonstration, and telling them to draw the necessary conclusions. This made it possible for Károly Peyer to demand, at the meeting of the party committee, the withdrawal of the resolution passed on March 9, referring to an alleged Arrow Cross attack and its possible consequences. The leadership put the issue before the executive committee summoned on March 13. At the session of this body, Árpád Szakasits supported the idea of going on with the independence movement, but Peyer stated that the right wing could not support such a policy. Finally, the executive committee accepted the arguments of the right wing and decided not to attend the demonstration. The banning resolution was to appear in *Népszava*.

Communists working in the editorial board of *Népszava*—Gyula Kállai, Géza Losonczy, András Kasztel—as well as left-wing social democrat Lajos Gosztonyi protested against the publication of the resolution. A sharp debate followed, but referring to the resolution of the party, Szakasits ordered to publish the resolution, adding that he personally still approved of the demonstration, and did not object to members of the editorial board attending it.

The March 14 and 15 issues of *Népszava* published the resolution of the executive committee of the SDP: "The idea had come up that on March 15 workers should pilgrimage to the statue of Petőfi. However, since according to information received from several sources extremist right-wing elements are going to disturb and provoke this beautiful and respectful celebration, the party leadership insists that the organized workers . . . stay away from the planned pilgrimage".

However, it was not the alleged Arrow Cross provocation that made Peyerist leaders turn against the anti-fascist policy the party had pursued for some months, but rather the illusions they cherished concerning the new Prime Minister. Right-wing social democrats suffered the advance of the Left only until they saw that certain members of the government contemplated the strengthening of the independence movement with benevolence. At the moment the anti-fascist movement "became uncomfortable for the government", the Right was willing to sacrifice the work of several long months and let down the masses already assembled to fight for independence, against fascism and war. The decision also revealed how weak and insecure the left wing of the SDP was: at the first sign of pressure Szakasits and his followers withdrew, and let the standpoint of the right prevail in such a vital issue.

The SDP resolution adopted on the eve of March 15 had a paralyzing effect not only on the organized workers, but on the groups of intellectuals and of the small bourgeoisie as well. The large-scale March celebration promised by the government had the same effect on the masses.

In the morning of March 15, a large-scale flag dedication ceremony was held on the Square of the Heroes in the presence of Horthy's son, the new vice governor, and Kállay, the new prime minister, who later "made an appeal to the nation on the radio".

The position taken up by the SDP surprised not only some communists, but the Central Committee of the HPC as well. They did not count on the fact that the government and right-wing social democrats would compel the social democratic left wing to retreat. The situation became worse since the banning was published only on the eve of the demonstration, i.e. on a Saturday. The Central Committee of the HPC, having an extremely short time on their hands, acted fast. They issued their slogan: "We shall still be there!" Communists and the socialist youth appeared in front of the factories, in the trade unions, at the youth organizations and workers' homes, and mobilized for the demonstration through personal connections, too. They tried to convince the workers of the necessity of the demonstration at a cultural evening on March 13, and at the social democratic central and district commemorations on March 15.

It was the relentless work of the communists that had made the demonstration a success.

On March 15, the crowd began to assemble already before 3 p.m., but the decision of right-wing social democrats made it impossible to carry out the planned organized march on the embankment of the Danube. Only about two hundred construction workers marched up in organized ranks. The delegation of the Transylvanian and Székely workers led by communist Béla Józsa also arrived in close ranks, then at 3 o'clock the members of the HHMC arrived. "When we, the members of the Memorial Committee, have reached the statue, a mass of several thousand people gathered around us in a few minutes.", József Darvas wrote. "Until then workers were walking in the neighbouring streets and on the embankment of the Danube, in tens and twenties, but suddenly, as if by a given signal, they occupied the square of the statue".

In the wreath-laying ceremonies that followed the organized workers were represented by János Katona, a leader of the leather and skin industry workers' union, construction workers by Miklós Somogyi, their Vice President, the peasantry by Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, MP, the intellectuals by Aurél Bernáth painter, the staff of *Szabad Szó* by Imre Kovács, the Hungarian Peasant League by József Dancs. The delegates from Transylvania also brought wreaths. Afterwards the wreaths bought on the *fillérs* collected from workers were laid. They had red ribbons saying: "Workers from the outskirts of Budapest—in the spirit of Petőfi and Táncsics for freedom" or "For those who fight for independence and freedom—from workers of the Woolwashery"; another wreath read simply: "Independent Hungary". Wreaths were laid by workers of Terézváros—"For Freedom"—and by the young workers, too. On the appeal of the Memorial Committee, many people placed bouquets or single flowers on the pedestal of the statue.

Originally, loud demonstration with slogans was planned for the Parliament area only, at the Kossuth statue. However, so great was the enthusiasm of the mass that boards and transparencies with the HPC slogans and portraits of Kossuth, Táncsics, and Petőfi suddenly appeared from under the coats already on the Petőfi Square. "Slogans rose in the air, the mass echoed rumbling: 'We shall be prisoners no more. Long live the independent, democratic Hungary! Away from Germany! Bring our soldiers home! Down with the war! Separate peace treaty! Death to Hitler!' Then a new slogan was given: 'Up to the Kossuth-statue! Up to the Kossuth-statue through Szabadság Square!'"

Singing Kossuth songs and shouting slogans, the crowd set out for the Kossuth statue through a street bordered by the hotels of the Danube-embankment, followed by the wondering eyes of German officers and civilians from the windows. Huge boards spanning the streets were carried in front of and among the thousands of marchers: "Independent, free, democratic Hungary!" "Not one soldier for Hitler". When the march reached the Police Headquarters, hundreds of policemen dashed out from the doorways, and began to beat the crowd with batons. They enclosed those in the front lines, and after wild scuffle pushed them into the court of

the Headquarters. Those who were further back dispersed in the neighbouring streets but then re-assembled again and went to the Kossuth statue. Several hundreds of people, mute and bare-headed, payed tribute to the memory of Lajos Kossuth.

The Budapest demonstration against fascism and war was complemented by the festive memorials of left-wing papers and a great many festive sessions taking place both in the capital and elsewhere. *Népszava* and *Magyar Nemzet* devoted their full March 15 issues to the anniversary. *Szabad Szó*, *Kis Újság*, *Mai Nap* and *Független Magyarország* also consecrated several articles to this topic. At Kolozsvár, Transylvania, the *Erdélyi Magyar Közművelődési Egyesület* (Transylvanian Hungarian Educational Society)—which had joined the HHMC—organized a great memorial session to open an exhibition of 1848 relics.

The SDP's festive session was organized at the Ironworkers' Home, but there were festive commemorations in virtually all the district organizations of the SDP, at workers' homes in Erzsébetváros, Óbuda, Ferencváros, Pesterzsébet, Újpest and Kispeszt, in several trade unions and in larger towns like Szombathely, Szeged, Pécs, Debrecen, Győr, Diósgyőr. At Felsőgalla the celebration was banned. The atmosphere of the celebration reflected that the majority of organized workers understood that in 1942, March 15 meant much more than sheer commemoration: it was a profession of faith in the principles of independence and liberty, democratic political rights and social rise.

The demonstration on March 15, 1942 and its antecedents, the foundation of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee, were outstanding events in the history of the independence movement proving the possibility of uniting anti-fascist forces and also the presence of the conditions necessary for the unfolding of a national anti-fascist resistance movement in Hungary. Illegality did not prevent the HPC from justly recognizing the interests of the workers and the nation and finding the most feasible way for mobilizing and leading the anti-fascist masses.

The demonstration revealed that the success of the independence movement was due, besides the right policy of the HPC, to the increasingly close cooperation of the communist and socialist masses, of communist and left-wing social democratic leaders, as well as to the temporary repression of right-wing social democratic policy. The increasing activity of the masses, and especially the more definite say of organized workers in matters related to political struggle, and "the constructive program of future Hungary" united all kinds of individuals holding different views, but agreeing on the main tasks ahead. The working class retained its leading role.

It was no accident that the government attempted to strike a blow at the most vulnerable point of the independence movement and, as we saw, succeeded in doing so immediately prior to March 15. Right-wing social democratic leaders stabbed the working class and the petty bourgeois masses undertaking anti-war struggle in the back when the organized workers' movement could have opened up new perspectives for the anti-fascist resistance movement. The attitude of right-wing social democrats contributed to the hesitation of petty bourgeois and bourgeois

elements, while the government realized that the best means to upset and paralyze anti-fascist forces was to intimidate right-wing social democrats. It was also proved that within the leadership of the SDP, no such Left had been formed yet which would have been capable of breaking with the right-wing and taking the sole responsibility for its former policy and, bravely relying upon the masses, would turn against right-wing policy. The preparations for March 15 also showed how great an impact the Horthy regime still had on the masses. A change of government, and illusions about the person of the new Prime Minister compelled even serious anti-German forces to retreat.

III. Temporary Setbacks of the Independence Movement Efforts to Reorganize the Hungarian Party of Communists and the Independence Movement

III. 1. Terror Campaign Against the HPC and the Anti-Fascist Forces

In 1942 Miklós Kállay virtually continued the policy of his predecessor László Bárdossy, the only difference being that he paid more attention to the interests of finance-capitalist and aristocratic circles. In his policy-making speech in Parliament on March 19 and in another speech on April 20, 1942 he praised friendship with Germany and called for the continuation of the anti-Soviet war. He stated: "There can be no change in Hungarian foreign policy, since it is already more than policy, it is given fact. . . . Our place is marked out on the side of Germany and Italy, both today in the war, and tomorrow at the table of the peace negotiations and decision making."

Kállay's acts, too, proved the above. He left Bárdossy's cabinet unaltered; moreover, in April 1942, he even included further pro-German politicians in his government: Béla Lukács, Chairman of the Government Party and István Antal, former Press Chief of Gömbös. The Kállay government turned down a note sent by the US Administration on April 7, in which Washington announced its willingness to disregard the war declaration "extorted" from the Hungarian government, provided that the country were not directly involved in the war of the Axis powers.

Kállay fully met the military obligations undertaken by his predecessor, and in April-May 1942 the Second Hungarian Army was sent to the front at his order. He personally delivered an encouraging farewell speech when the loaded military trains rolled off from the railway station.

Soon German mistrust against the Prime Minister eased. Immediately prior to his visit to Germany, the German ambassador reported the following: "We have no reason to doubt his loyalty." This opinion was fully justified by Kállay's visit to Hitler on June 6. The meeting coincided with the unfolding of the Spring offensive of the German army and the successes of the Wehrmacht under Kharkov and Kerch. Kállay's visit to Hitler was another profession of allegiance, a new proof of "unselfish" engagement on the side of fascist Germany. "A perfect harmony reigned among the responsible leaders of the German Empire and Hungary", Kállay said in the Foreign Relations Committee of Parliament. A few weeks later, in an interview to the Budapest correspondent of the German press, Kállay spoke in the same tone: "All I was told at the Führer's General Headquarters has either been fulfilled, or is being realized presently"; the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger* quoted: "We are

one with our German and Italian allies in our struggle to destroy bolshevism, a struggle we consider our duty in order to defend our Fatherland and Europe."

Kállay's internal policy was much more refined and dynamic than that of his predecessor. He pursued a well-conceived strategy and resolute propaganda to bring about some kind of "wartime national unity". After the Moscow defeat and the state of war with the Western Powers, however, the advocacy of an unconditional pro-German policy was no longer suitable to attract the pro-Western bourgeois circles, and even less to appeal to workers or establish the desired "wartime national unity". Therefore, Kállay chose to act as the champion of independence and of the *par excellence* "Hungarian national objectives". He compared the war to the 1848 War of Independence, speaking of "our war", "the separate war of Hungarians".

In order to establish a "wartime national unity", he made concessions to the extremist pro-German groups by promising new anti-Jewish measures. In order to gain the support of the working masses, he used social demagoguery and promised a whole series of social reform measures, including a reform of administration, draft bills on investing thousands of millions in agriculture and industry and a building plot action. He advocated the legality of anti-Hitler parties, including the SDP. As a gesture to the trade unions, he gave up the plan of introducing a state-organized labour-exchange system. Thanks to Kállay, the Christian Party regained the post of the mayor of the capital, while the Smallholders Party and the Peasant League were permitted to organize in a number of towns.

As to those who were still unwilling to support his policy (implying anti-Soviet war, increasing war sacrifices and the establishment of a "national unity"), he plainly stated: "On this one issue (i.e. support for the war) I demand unconditional loyalty. . . . *I am looking for partners, allies in the service of this great aim; those who refuse must be destroyed. . . .*" (Italics mine,—I.P.)

Béla Imrédy welcomed the program, although with certain reservations, in the name of his party and the extreme right-wing party coalition. At the same time, he demanded that the government should take a definite stand against the "left-wing popular front" in the name of "the unity of the nation", and should eliminate once and for all "these phenomena becoming ever more dangerous".

Parallel with his campaign for "national unity", Kállay also launched a campaign against those who had attended the demonstration on March 15. Certain members of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee were fast to retreat. At the March 20 session of Parliament, Zoltán Tildy disassociated himself and his party from the independence movement and voted the government full confidence and a free hand on the three major issues: the army and the war, public supplies, and the solution of the problem of national minorities.

On April 2, Imre Kovács, President of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee, was arrested, together with György Bálint, Imre Cserépfalvi and Károly Háy. Other members of the Committee were subjected to permanent police persecution, and "their activity was controlled to such an extent"—the police report reads—"that the Committee preferred to end all activity, all the more so

since several of its members were warned to do so". The dissolution speeded up when the HHMC premises, too, were eliminated. Right-wing social democratic leaders also began investigations against those who had attended the demonstration; it was impossible for left-wingers to participate in the activity of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee.

The Central Committee of the HPC realized that the independence movement faced a novel situation, although the change was only indicated by the tendency and first measures of Kállay's policy and the fact that he was a member, though not the most talented one, of the Bethlen-Teleki faction. However, the viewpoints and conclusions of the Central Committee, based on the above meagre data, succeeded in giving a valuable basis for the evaluation of the two-year period while Kállay was in office. The evaluation did not need correction then, and it stands correct today when the activity of the Kállay government can already be judged from an historical perspective.

The Central Committee session held in April 1942 deemed the policy of the Kállay government very dangerous from the point of view of anti-war independence movement, and stated that Kállay's dual aim was "1) to mobilize the country for Hitler's war, and 2) to use a strong hand to maintain order and drive the developing democratic movements back, and ensure at the same time power positions against Hitler and his followers in Hungary". To this end, Kállay strived to make his policy acceptable to all, even opposed forces—Imrédy and his supporters and the anti-Hitler opposition. "He buys his position from Hitler, gives him soldiers and bread, and spreads the news to the Left and the people that his is a left-wing government. He identifies himself with the slogans of independence and freedom, and gives definite concessions to the bourgeois parties... At the same time he turns against democracy... He oppresses all democratic manifestations, attempts to oust workers—the representatives of democracy in political life—from the scene and wants to cut the Communist Party off from the masses". This was an extremely dangerous policy since "the *petite bourgeoisie* of the towns and villages, and even the bourgeoisie as a whole, have no definite opinion and hesitate between the main political forces"—in the fight of pro- and anti-Hitlerite forces—and may thus be influenced by the political endeavours of the Kállay government.

The party decided that in this situation the main assault was to be directed against the government. A *national government* had to be fought for which, relying on and cooperating with the anti-war mass movement and the "parliament of independence forces", would end the war and dissociate itself from the Tripartite Alliance, pursue a foreign policy based on the anti-fascist world coalition, and start the democratic reconstruction of Hungary. The Central Committee considered it possible for the party to give temporary support to the Kállay government for tactical reasons, provided that the government would oppose certain German demands.

In evaluating the events of March 15, the Central Committee paid special attention to the behaviour of the SDP. They clearly saw the connection between the formation of the Kállay government and the March 13 resolution of the executive

committee of the SDP banning the demonstration, and stated that, among the workers, the resolution generated definite opposition not only to right-wing SDP leaders, but also to the party itself. The HPC learned that many intended to leave the party. A great many SDP organizations and many trade unions condemned the party leadership for the *volte-face* on March 15. One of the party organizations even demanded to summon the Congress, so that a competent forum might decide on the issue.

The HPC Central Committee exposed the right-wing social democrats and the untenability of the pretext, the Arrow Cross provocation, used for forbidding the demonstration. It pointed to the fact that, by staying away from the demonstration, the right-wing of the SDP intended to prepare its separation from the independence movement led by the HPC, and emphasized that the left-wing leaders of the SDP were also responsible for not being firm and definite enough at the executive committee session. The weakness of the left wing was corroborated by the fact that, after the demonstration, Árpád Szakasits seemed more and more averse to negotiate with the Communist Party. As a result, the "official" relationship of the two parties was broken. However, the HPC Central Committee, which sharply criticized the policy of the SDP leadership, pointed out that the solution lay in strengthening the relations and not in a complete break. Organized workers had to liquidate the "March 15 policy" within the SDP and return "to the road of active struggle for an independent, free, democratic Hungary". The majority of left-wing social democrats and those who wanted to resign from the party understood the proposals of the communists and tried to counteract the submissive policy of their party and trade union leaders.

The Central Committee came to important conclusions as to the further tasks of the communists and the independence movement. Both the organizational and ideological strengthening of the party had to be speeded up. The *hesitation of the parties that had contributed* to the weakening of the independence movement and the absolute necessity of further anti-war actions made it essential for the party to increase its influence on the masses. We must become capable of leading the masses, they emphasized, even if, under the influence of the opposition parties and the government, they were to break away from the independence movement. The Committee issued an appeal to every organization, to each functionary and member, to do their utmost to increase the membership, establish strong branch organizations and shock brigades and increase the influence of the party in factories.

In keeping with the principles of alliance policy, the HPC wanted to further exploit the results of the independence movement and the March 15 events, and to counterbalance the influence of government policy on the mid-layers and the bourgeois wing of the independence movement. It also began to make preparations for celebrating May Day.

In 1942, Hitler, besides demanding further military aid, presented new economic requirements as well. The first signs of the effects of these came in the spring of 1942, when bread rations were decreased, and food shortage increased. In April and May

1942, there was a general shortage of potato, fat, meat and milk in the country. In May 1942, rationing on milk was introduced in Budapest, and the adult population got no more milk. The rations of fine flour, fat and soap further decreased. In June, the government reduced bread rations from 20 to 15 decagrammes. All this happened in a situation when even Kállay himself had to admit that "the supply of the population of Hungary is at an extremely low level... therefore, it would be very hard to further decrease the supply of our peoples, it being already at the minimum; the same applies to surplus production". However, there was no minimum which Kállay would leave untouched if the Germans demanded otherwise.

The HPC tried to mobilize the working class against suffering the increasing burdens. The party wanted communists and left-wing social democrats to provide a stronger support for the wage and social welfare movements gaining momentum, and tried to shape the movements so that they become an organic part of "the general action launched for an independent, free, democratic Hungary".

In April 1942, the all-steward meeting of the Budapest group of the National Alliance of Hungarian Construction Workers (*MÉMOSZ*) decided "to send a delegation to the Minister of Public Supplies in order to find a remedy to the disturbance and shortages of public supplies". In a resolution the general assembly of the house-painters' group demanded that the government should "ban the export of cereals, foodstuff and other consumers' goods, for it is the duty of the government to protect the people of the country from famine". Similar actions unfolded in the Ironworkers' Union, at the Transport Company of Budapest Capital Town (*BSZKRT*), among commercial clerks and leather workers. On May 24, the general assembly of the miners discussed problems related to the public supplies of miners and foundrymen. They decided to demand remedy from the ministers of Home Affairs and Industry in a memorandum.

Several signs indicated the government's intent to increase terror against the independence movement and especially against the HPC. The extreme Right accused the Minister of Home Affairs of "impotence" and "collusion with the popular front". It was expected that Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer would set an example. Therefore, greater care had to be taken of preparing the underground activity of those who participated in legal anti-fascist actions. Great emphasis was laid on conspiratory rules and the communist moral stand. At the same time, a certain contradiction emerged: some members accepted illegality with concern and fear. Since, according to the leadership, the primary task was to overcome this "unwillingness", abiding by the conspiratory rules was somewhat pushed in the background.

After March 15, it was increasingly difficult to advocate an independence policy. Censorship consistently prevented the publication of articles pervaded by the spirit of independence. It prevented *Népszava* from answering the accusations expressed in Parliament against the party. "Imrédy and his extreme right-wing partners... demanded not only the silencing of the SDP, but also the smothering of all sounds which, under the influence of the past years, had united to protect universal

Hungarian interests and realize the universal Hungarian objectives"—the article banned by censorship reads. "We will not be silent when the voice of the sober Hungarian people is most needed, when the voice of the people would carry most weight."

Thus in left-wing papers, in *Népszava*, among others, a growing number of articles advocated retreat from active political engagement and dealt with abstract questions unrelated to the direct tasks. Communists tried to criticize this spirit in vain, as censorship became ever more implacable and editors more faint-hearted.

The police interfered with all cultural programs advocating the idea of independence, too. The Ministry of Home Affairs banned the exhibition of the Group of the Socialist Artists after the first day, and arrested Károly Háy, a leader of the group.

Although the initiative of the Attila József Memorial Committee was crowned with success—the ashes of the great proletarian poet were brought to Budapest and a funeral worthy of his memory was attended by several thousands of people—the police would not permit the large-scale Attila József memorial evening planned for April 30.

The Communist Party wanted the Hungarian working class to celebrate May Day in the spirit of anti-war and anti-fascist struggle. Its slogans were concise demands representing the interests of the entire nation: "Not one soldier for Hitler! Peace and Bread!" Right-wing social democratic leaders, however, were unwilling to celebrate May Day in this spirit. In a pamphlet addressed to the organized workers, they told them "to mind their own work, fulfil their obligations the same as in the past, and prove in the future, too, that their discipline, resoluteness, expertness, trustworthiness and behaviour befitting the times entitle them to be treated as a serious factor to be taken into account". The Communist Party could not counterbalance the impact of an appeal so unworthy of the international holiday of the proletariat and the desperate struggle of the working classes of the countries subjugated by fascism, since owing to technical reasons, the pamphlet of the HPC was released only in the last minute, i.e. on April 30.

But there were other factors, too, which influenced the success of the demonstration planned for May Day. In April, the police launched a large-scale investigation against the HPC. Military organs also went into action. From April 1942 onward, left-wing social democratic and trade union leaders were drafted into companies of refractory soldiers. Some 350–400 were put at the mercy of the most ruthless officers and non-commissioned officers, and sent to the Eastern Front with the first spring transport in the first days of May. There were hardly any trade unions or district SDP organizations left unaffected by the drafts. These events created immense panic among the organized workers.

On April 30, 1942, the investigations reached the organs of the HPC. The Újpest communist group was eliminated in a few days. By May Day, the arrests had reached the summit of party organs. The party press was found, and the May issue of *Szabad Nép*, ready for distribution, was confiscated.

Organs responsible for home affairs were ordered to completely eliminate the communist movement; therefore, they set out with a huge apparatus. In mid-May they were joined by the Defensive Department of the Military General Staff (DEF), and the central investigating headquarters of the gendarmerie. The interrogations and hearings were carried out mainly by those gendarme-detectives who had already proved in the Carpathian Ukraine, at Alag, in Transylvania and in the Southland that they were the perfect masters of their "profession", i.e. massacre, and completely lacked humanity. The arrested were first taken to the Budapest Police Headquarters, and when this proved to be too small, they were dragged to a separate building of the Andrásy-barracks specially equipped for this purpose.

The first days were enough to show that the tortures used were more cruel than ever before. Virtually none escaped stretching on the bench, hanging, electrification and the sack filled with horse-radish. In the first days, Károly Rezi, leader of the Újpest communist group, was beaten to death. Those who refused to confess had to see the members of their families, wife, parents, etc. tortured under their eyes.

When the large-scale wave of arrests began, the Central Committee provisionally suspended the activity of the party organizations, and ordered party members in danger to go into illegality, and leave immediately their work-place, home and, if possible, the capital for the time of the investigations.

However, not even the strict orders of the party could prevent the arrests. Military detectives, knowing that HPC organizations functioned in legal workers' organizations, carried out mass arrests in certain trade unions, for instance that of the bakers.

More than 500 communist, left-wing social democrats and trade union functionaries were arrested in three months by the investigating organs of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Defensive Department and the gendarmerie. On June 1, Ferenc Rózsa, Secretary of the Hungarian Party of Communists, was arrested. He had been tortured cruelly for two weeks. They wanted to extort evidence against Árpád Szakasits and about the negotiations carried out with the SDP. Ferenc Rózsa remained indomitable. His body was completely broken, he was unconscious when taken to hospital where he died on June 13. On July 6 the detectives caught Zoltán Schönherz, member of the Central Committee and the Secretariat. He, too, stood the terrible tortures with the heroism of a true communist.

The arrests were a tremendous blow for the party. Three members of the five-strong Central Committee, virtually all the members of the the Budapest Territorial Committee, and almost all the members of the other territorial committees were arrested; the majority of those in medium-level bodies were also caught.

Nearly simultaneously with the Budapest arrests, the investigating authorities of the gendarmerie completed the elimination of the communist movement in Carpathian Ukraine. The Ungvár group of the Special Court of the Chief of Staff declared urgency and gave serious prison sentences to 131 of the 200 arrested communists; 11 were sentenced to death. Five were reprieved, but the other six—

Rudolf Wiener, Hermann Jakubovits, János Plancsák, David Schönberger, Salamon Szimkovics and Elek Lenyka—were executed on July 31, 1942.

The Kállay government wanted to get rid once and for all of the social democratic youth organizations and primarily the NYC causing more and more trouble. On May 5, 1942, Miklós Kállay signed a decree stating that young people liable for pre-military service, i.e. for *Levente* must not be members of either political parties or "political organizations termed otherwise", and must not attend their meetings and assemblies. This sealed the fate of the National Youth Committee. Referring to the decree, the right-wing leaders of the SDP winded up the party's youth organizations.

The anti-communist campaign reached its summit with an order issued by Keresztes-Fischer on May 26, "to register all who are unreliable from the point of view of state security" and "take the necessary precautions" against them.

When it had become obvious that the SDP and the trade unions were the hotbed of bolshevism, the extreme right wing, the General Staff and the gendarmerie no longer contented themselves with the destruction of the HPC, but strived to implement their long-cherished plan, the complete elimination of the SDP and the trade unions.

The attack against the SDP and the trade unions—as mentioned above—began with the enrolling of left-wing organized workers into companies of refractory soldiers. There followed the open prosecution of organized workers by factory commanders in almost all war factories. Organized workers were "bothered" permanently at the Standard Electric Factory, at the Siemens Works, and in the war factories of Salgótarján and Debrecen, in order to create a situation where it was easy "to pick a quarrel and launch a procedure against them". At other places they were repeatedly sentenced to 14–21 days of imprisonment for the sole reason that they were trade union members. There were factories where the commanders forced the workers to leave the trade unions. From the spring of 1942, a whole avalanche of measures were taken against the organized workers—impeachments, police surveillance and internments.

The attack launched against the top leaders of the SDP was most probably a special action of the military bodies, the DEF. In the course of the investigation, a copy of György Pálóczy Horváth's letter to Imre Kovács was found at the SDP Secretariat and the detectives learned about the talks between the HPC and Árpád Szakasits. As a result, they arrested Árpád Szakasits on June 4, and later two other leaders of the party, Illés Mónus and József Büchler were also summoned to the Hadik barracks. In these days practically all the communist journalists of *Népszava* were arrested. Ferenc Földes was drafted to a company of refractory soldiers; Gyula Kállai, András Kasztel and Lőrinc Kovai were arrested; a warrant was issued for Aladár Mód already in illegality by that time; later he, too, was caught.

Meanwhile, the extreme right wing continued its attacks in Parliament. In his interpellations on April 29, June 3, and June 10, 1942 to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Home Affairs, Gábor Vajna, parliamentary leader of the Arrow Cross Party, demanded that the SDP and the trade unions be disbanded immediately,

because "bolshevist activity pullulates mainly in the bosom of the SDP and the trade unions". A few days later, on June 17, Arrow Cross MP László Bakó demanded that all workers' organizations admitting of communist activity be eliminated.

Actions launched to eliminate the SDP and the trade unions, however, did not fit into the plans of Kállay and even less into those of Keresztes-Fischer. Instead of eliminating the SDP, they wanted to turn it into an obedient means in the hands of the government. After Árpád Szakasits had been arrested, the political department of the police came to the aid of the SDP. On June 6, Deputy Chief of Police József Sombor-Schweinitzer presented a lengthy report on the arrests of social democratic leaders and the probable consequences. Referring to "the opinion of more intelligent workers" he pointed out that "the arrests may have serious consequences in workers' circles", for even if they had refrained from sabotage action before, it could easily happen that these events would bring about unwanted action". There is no direct evidence as to whether it was the government that ordered social democratic leaders to be released, but it is most unlikely that the General Staff, which had endeavoured to eliminate the SDP for long years, would have let them free in possession of evidence. Another circumstance indicating government interference is that, in his interpellation, László Bakó explained the release of Árpád Szakasits by "higher instructions" and linked the subject with the fact that the Prime Minister was unwilling to disband the SDP. Bajcsy-Zsilinszky in his letter to the Prime Minister aimed at helping those under arrest also considered the arrest of social democratic leaders an individual action of the General Staff.

On June 9, Árpád Szakasits and the other social democratic leaders were set free. Yet another attempt of the General Staff and the extreme right wing had failed to come through. However, they did not give up, as indicated by their actions directed against the SDP and the trade unions—primarily the local groups—and aimed at limiting or rendering impossible their political work.

In the summer of 1942, in the countryside, primarily in areas controlled by the gendarmerie and in the "province" of extreme right-wing Sub-Prefect László Endre in Pest county, retaliatory measures against socialist organizations followed one another. The members of the SDP, primarily local leaders and the sellers of *Népszava*, suffered permanent molestation. By autumn 1942, the campaign against *Népszava* had reached such proportions that the leadership of the SDP had to turn to the Minister of Home Affairs, to ask defence for the few remaining sellers and subscribers of the paper. They lodged a protest in the paper itself against those who considered reading *Népszava* "an act to be punished politically". The radios of SDP members were confiscated one after the other; holding local social democratic meetings was rendered impossible. The leaders of smaller party organizations in the countryside were interned or placed under police supervision, or proceedings were launched against them. Consequently, out of several hundreds of countryside party organizations, only 15–20 remained. Organized workers were especially badly hit by the fact that their workers' homes were confiscated by leaps and bounds. Apart from its political significance, this measure had quite serious financial con-

sequences, too. Up to the autumn of 1942, in Budapest the Kőbánya and Pesterzsébet premises of the *Munkásotthon Szövetkezet* (Workers' Home cooperative) were taken to be used to billet soldiers. The same happened to workers' homes in the countryside, at Diósgyőr, Szeged, Debrecen, Pécs, Pápa, Nyíregyháza, Zalaegerszeg, Kaposvár and Győr.

The situation was further aggravated by the attitude of right-wing social democratic and trade union leaders. They set out from the opportunist viewpoint—in vogue since the twenties—that the legal existence of workers' organizations was endangered by communist influence and the advance of left-wing policy. This assumption was seemingly justified by the events. Once the communist influence was eliminated, they thought, the SDP and the trade unions would become "presentable" again in the eyes of the government. Therefore, right-wing social democratic leaders tried to finish the process started by the arrests sanctioned by the government. They strived to eliminate left-wing policy in their organizations. Their first measure was intended to put an end to the political informative character of Tuesday party meetings. They forbid party gatherings to deal with political issues. The elimination of social democratic youth organizations deprived the left of that layer which "had represented a throbbing force in party life, organization and in agitation for *Népszava*". They forbid social democrats to take part in excursions serving as a cover for political discussions.

At the all-trade union committee session held at the Ironworkers' Home on June 2, 1942, Peyer resolutely condemned what he called bolshevist agitation in trade unions. "He called the attention of those present to the activity of agents infiltrating the trade unions" and pointed out that "a most definite stand must be taken against them; their dangerous and harmful activity must be prevented..."

The activity of Árpád Szakasits was openly condemned, for he "followed erroneous individual ways without the knowledge and agreement of the party, endangering thereby the labour movement as a whole". At the request of the government, the executive committee of the SDP issued a declaration in which the party disassociated itself from the independence movement led by the communists.

On June 12, the party leadership convened the executive committees of the district organizations and of the bigger rural party organizations. At the meeting, Peyer spoke more sharply than ever against all kinds of "adventurist endeavours and confused slogans". He stated that any kind of communist "attempt, be it just a hint, will be killed in its germ, and the initiators will be expelled publicly."

Right-wing social democratic leaders convened the plenary meeting of trade union executives on June 13. At the meeting a resolution of the Trade Union Council was announced which—as the report of Deputy Chief of Police Sombor-Schweinitzer states—emphasized that "all contingencies", i.e. "communist policy", must be eliminated from the trade unions, "since they threaten the movement in its very existence".

The right-wing leadership did its utmost to free the party from its "compromised" General Secretary and Chief Editor. They planned to dismiss Árpád Szakasits, but could not carry this out at the meeting of the national executive

committee on June 10, nor at the following sessions. The dismissal of the General Secretary took place only in August at another executive committee session; Ferenc Szeder, an MP loyal to the government was elected General Secretary on the proposal of the Minister of Home Affairs.

The increasing dissatisfaction of organized workers generated by the rightward shift of the SDP indubitably played an important role in delaying the dismissal of the General Secretary. Antipathy towards the party leadership was further increased by their behaviour at the time of the arrests and the declaration following it. That is why the chairman of the Kispest social democratic organization wrote: "The comrades fully understand the circumstances in which the declaration was born, but they still fail to agree with it". The name of Árpád Szakasits was identified with support for workers' unity and the policy of independence; therefore, his dismissal would have meant a far too definite turn to the right. This had to be understood by the Minister of Home Affairs, too. So Árpád Szakasits was allowed to keep his post as Editor-in-Chief of *Népszava*, while György Marosán, after his release, held his position as General Secretary of the National Federation of Food Industrial Workers.

In the summer of 1942, right-wing policy regained the upper hand in the social democratic movement. The left wing grew relatively weaker, especially within the party leadership; its voice in *Népszava* was silenced temporarily and so the propaganda for independence policy was taken off the agenda for the time being. *Népszava* and the trade union papers reflected—in keeping with the declaration of principle—disassociation from the communists, loyalty to the government, submission and opportunism.

Thus the government had achieved its aim. Owing to the arrests, call-ups, internments and, last but not least, the advance of the right-wing social democrats, party and trade union life—so lively only a few months earlier—was virtually paralyzed. This tendency was enforced by the initial successes of the new German offensive on the Eastern Front. The same was indicated by the fact that the number of subscribers to *Népszava* decreased by 4000 in the course of the summer months. Owing to the absence of communists and left-wing social democrats from party and trade union activity, and to the opportunism of right-wing leaders, "people virtually shuddered at action and all their energy was worn out in useless debates, meditation and self-reproach". Party organizations "breathe a dead atmosphere for kilometres around them", the chairman of the Kispest social democratic organization wrote in a letter.

This situation gave little hope as to the SDP leadership's defending the communists or the members of their own party at the trials of the General Staff's special court (set up after the arrests and investigations). The task of organizing the defence fell on the HPC.

After the arrests, the Central Committee of the Communist Party held a session at the end of July 1942, attended by László Gács, József Skolnik and János Kádár. (János Kádár was drawn into the work of the Central Committee at the beginning of May, when Mihály Tóth was arrested.) The Central Committee adopted the

following resolution: 1) Communists who had escaped arrests are to be found, broken contacts re-established, and organizational life started all over again; 2) the Central Committee is to be completed; 3) the position and policy of the party and the reasons and circumstances of the arrests are to be investigated; 4) measures are to be taken to save the comrades under arrest.

After establishing the first illegal contacts, the communists did their utmost to mobilize organized workers and public personalities involved in the independence front to help those who had been arrested through social democrats and trade union members still ready to cooperate with the communists. The main task was to prove at the trials that the HPC had never acted for "tactical" reasons and was not "misleading the masses" in order "to make use of their national and patriotic sentiments", but was always led—both in its past and present struggle for the independence of the country—by its political conviction. The court, on the other hand, wanted to prove that it was solely "a communist case" and the communists abused the slogan of independence for tactical reasons. They wanted to prove the usual slander that communists were traitors to their country and "agents of Moscow".

The first main trial was set for September 29–30, 1942. Communists prepared thoroughly for the trial and produced as witness several leading and highly respected personalities who had been involved in the independence movement: retired lieutenant-general, former ambassador, Rudolf Andorka, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky MP, Editor-in-Chief István Barankovics, Aladár baráti Huszár, SDP member of the Budapest municipal council, responsible editor of *Népszava*, Sándor Millok, SDP Deputy General Secretary Rudolf Pajor, *Népszava* Editor-in-Chief Árpád Szakasits, and university professor Gyula Szekfű.

This was the first time in the history of the Hungarian counter-revolutionary period that bourgeois and social democratic politicians were willing to be witnesses at a communist trial. Although the majority, Rudolf Andorka, Aladár baráti Huszár, Barankovics, and right-wing social democrat Millok and Pajor condemned the activities of the communists, the fact that they appeared at the trial surprised the court and meant that they admitted to some extent to have taken part in the independence movement led by the HPC.

At the trial Gyula Szekfű stated that in recent years the political activity of the organized workers had not been dominated by narrow class interests, but by *national interests*, as reflected by the independence movement. Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was the only witness who openly stood by the communists and condemned all who wanted to push the country into a catastrophe. He sharply criticized government policy, which in his opinion filled with anxiety all serious persons loving the country. He emphasized that he considered the independence movement a patriotic movement, despite the fact that it included communists and Jews. He said: "Communists can also be good Hungarians, concerned about the fate of their country".

Zoltán Schönherz, Secretary of the HPC, was sentenced to death, László Erdős, György Goldmann, Dezső Orosz and Ferenc Vida to life imprisonment; Mihály

Tóth to 15 years of imprisonment, György Máté to 10 years, Endre Rosta and András Rendek to nearly 2 years. András Kasztel and in a following trial Gyula Kállai had to be acquitted for lack of evidence and the same applied to György Marosán, too. However, immediately after his release, Kasztel was taken to the front in a company of refractory soldiers; he died there.

The day Schönherz was sentenced to death (September 30), Bajcsy-Zsilinszky applied for mercy in a letter to the Minister of Defence. He pointed out that "soon the best and major part of the nation will demand... what the communists had demanded in those unfortunate pamphlets". He asked the Minister: "be so kind as to exert your influence, that... Schönherz who was condemned to death be reprieved by the Chief of Staff". Primate Jusztinián Serédi also visited Ferenc Szombathelyi to ask mercy for Schönherz, but the Chief of General Staff was unyielding. On October 8, 1942 he signed the death sentence, and on the 9th, at 8.20 Zoltán Schönherz was executed in the courtyard of the Margit körút prison. In his last letter he said farewell to his family and the party. He knew well that the work for which he had sacrificed his life would be continued by his comrades. "I know that my work was not futile. If I were to be born again I would do the same. I die just as I lived."

In August 1942, the Special Court of the Chief of General Staff was given the case of some 400 prisoners who were tried in the following months. The sentences were very serious.

In the summer of 1942, anti-fascist forces suffered very serious blows. The HPC, the prime mover of anti-war struggle, had suffered serious losses from which it could not recover completely until the end of the war. The same stands for the left wing of the SDP. Terror, persecution, prison and gallows forced into retreat those bourgeois and petty bourgeois layers and public personalities who, in the successful era of the independence movement, followed it with sympathy, and even supported it. *In the autumn of 1942, the Hungarian anti-fascist independence movement, which until then—though weaker than the anti-fascist and anti-war struggle in other occupied countries—could keep pace with the resistance movement of the block of fascist countries, came to a serious crisis.*

III. 2. Efforts to Change the Pro-Axis Policy of the Kállay Government. The Communists' Struggle to Reorganize the Party and the Independence Movement

In the spring of 1942, the Wehrmacht launched a new offensive on the Eastern Front. As mentioned earlier, the Second Hungarian Army was sent to the front in connection with this move. By June 28, the German offensive had been going on in full strength in the Volga-Caucasus region. Although the Germans reached Stalingrad and even penetrated its territory, they could never take the town itself. On November 19, the Soviet Army began its counter-attack.

In Africa the British troops broke Rommel's series of victories; British and American forces landed on the shores of French North-Africa on November 8.

The first meeting of the prime ministers of the three allied big powers (Churchill, Harriman—representing Roosevelt—and Stalin) took place in Moscow, in August 1942. The Moscow meeting was an excellent proof of the increasing strength of anti-fascist world coalition.

The events compelled the pro-Western circles of the Hungarian ruling classes and part of the mid-layers to persuade Kállay to cautiously alter his pro-Axis policy. At meetings, for example, in the Hungarian Social Club, under the influence of István Bethlen, in the Revisionist League, the Foreign Affairs Society as well as in letters and memorials, they expressed their concern over Hungary's future fate and the government's foreign policy. On September 15, 1942, a report of Deputy Chief of Police Sombor-Schweinitzer informed the Minister of Home Affairs that "left-wing and extra-party MPs" had met several times at the flat of György Makay-Petrovics, Editor-in-Chief of *Újság*. The topic of their discussions was to launch an action to change the foreign policy of the government. Similar meetings took place at the flat of royalist leader Count Sigray. A confidential information on the internal situation of the SDP reported a lively political activity of "leading layers" which "see ever more clearly that Germany cannot win the war". In the Upper House there was a strong camp of those envisaging the failure of the Axis, and "concerned about Hungarian independence". "Bourgeois politicians, university professors, industrialists, writers, aristocrats and journalists express ever more frequently that they see very little chance for Axis victory".

Among the authors of the documents sent to the Prime Minister we find the former general Jenő Tombor, foreign political editor of *Magyar Nemzet*, and a renown military expert, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, together with Kállay's close friend, György Barcza, former ambassador to London. *Our Present Military Situation*, a military survey-study by retired lieutenant-general János Kiss reached the military circles at about the same time. The author stated that the display of strength of the German Empire on the European continent was past its climax. Although the date, sharpness and tone of these writings differed, their contents and messages were essentially identical.

The authors of the memoranda, the participants of the above-mentioned meetings, and those who wrote the various letters all agreed that Hitler had lost the war. Anti-Hitler groups followed with keen interest the events on the Eastern Front. Some clearly saw that, despite its serious losses, the Soviet Army not only withstood German attacks in 1942, but, what was more, launched a successful counter-attack in the summer of 1942. They were even more absorbed in the series of successes of the Western Powers in Africa, and pondered over the possibility that British and American troops, once they got to the Mediterranean, could try to land on the Balkans.

Nor did they disregard the increasing strength of the resistance movement in fascist-dominated countries. In his memorandum on September 22, 1942, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky pointed out that the peoples of the occupied countries "would not step in

the row of the builders of a new Europe conceived and led by the Germans", a fact that pushed the balance of powers in favour of the anti-Hitler coalition, "all the less since they do not, cannot, believe in a final German victory."

Recognizing the hopelessness of waging war alongside the Axis, the above groups were compelled to seek ways and means of a gradual and cautious withdrawal from the Axis. First they suggested that the government give no more soldiers to Hitler, gradually withdraw the Second Hungarian Army from the Eastern Front, and reduce economic assistance to the German fascists.

They thought that the time had come to make the necessary diplomatic preparations of a secession from the Axis. It was suggested that the functions of prime minister and minister of foreign affairs should be separated, a change allowing for more courageous political decisions on the part of the prime minister. Further changes were necessary, primarily the dismissal of finance minister Lajos Reményi-Schneller. "An opportunity has to be found right now", a memorandum stated, "to send Hungarians capable of representing, explaining and justifying the Hungarian standpoint to neutral states..." In their opinion, within the Axis, Italy could be relied upon more powerfully. They urged the deepening of Hungarian standpoint to neutral states..." In their opinion, within the Axis, Italy could be relied upon more powerfully. They urged the deepening of

They called the government's attention to the possibilities imminent in the Western contacts of the SDP: "The events of World War II up to now have shown that workers—and primarily the British Labour Party—will have a much bigger say at the peace talks than they had after World War I." Therefore, advantages originating from contacts between the Hungarian and the Western social democratic parties had to be exploited.

The anti-Hitlerite stand of the pro-Western groups of the Hungarian ruling classes and smallholder-party politicians close to them indubitably signified a step forward as compared to government policy. The value of their endeavours was, however, greatly reduced by the fact that, because of their anti-Soviet attitude, their plan was built upon seeking relations only with western powers, and upon a policy of *wait and see*, instead of aiming at a definite turn against Hitler and the mobilization of *all* anti-Nazi forces. Their anti-Hitlerism derived not so much from their opposition to fascism, as from their fear of another lost war. Their search for an advantageous foreign policy was determined by their ambition to save their regime and their power aspirations through the holocaust of war. They wanted an internal policy which would "prevent all the radical deviations of the various social layers" and "would orient them in a nation-saving conservative direction".

The effects of increasing war burdens, growing blood sacrifices, and signs of defeat already made themselves felt in the increasing dissatisfaction of the working masses. They had to face the fact that "the firm belief in victory" had been shaken, and "doubts" and "uncertainties" emerged among the working masses and the intelligentsia. However, open manifestations of dissatisfaction were successfully prevented in the summer and autumn of 1942 by a concentrated attack against all left-wing forces. What was to be done next?

The answer of the pro-Western groups was perhaps best summarized in a memorandum written by Bajcsy-Zsilinszky claiming that an anti-Axis "opposition" ought to be established with the support and cooperation of the government, including the most respected members of the Upper House opposition headed by Count István Bethlen, the Smallholders Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Bourgeois Freedom Party. Censorship was to be eased and the above parties were to be granted a greater freedom of movement and organization, freer parliamentary and press activity, and especially a greater freedom in establishing relations with the masses. For, as Bajcsy-Zsilinszky stated, the "opposition" had two inseparable tasks: first of all, to maintain order by all means, even by heroic efforts, and to save the country. "However, the above parties can undertake the burden of maintaining order only if they are not forced into a silence destroying their prestige, popularity and relations with the masses". The other memorandum mentioned above expressed similar views.

Besides this primary aim, the humane solution of the issues of the Jews and of the national minorities was also considered an essential and urgent task of policy. These groups worried best the government should issue or plan new anti-Jewish measures, whereas no day passed without leading statesmen, church representatives, writers and public personalities of the West condemning the persecution of the Jews. The only solution was for the government "to give up all further measures against the Jews". The settling of the national-minority issue was justified by similar considerations. The most urgent task was to call to account those who were responsible for the massacre in the Southland (*Délvidék*) in January 1942, and to compensate and rehabilitate the victims and their relatives.

In December 1942, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky compiled another memorandum which he planned to send to the Governor and the Prime Minister—with the signatures of anti-Hitler MPs outside the Government Party, members of the Upper House, and the Christian episcopate—as a novel sign of protest against the persecution of Jews, the situation of soldiers in refractory companies and the *Újvidék* events. The memorandum also outlined the possible directions of development. By the end of 1942, it had been signed by almost 30 people, the majority being Parliamentary MPs belonging to the Smallholders Party, the Social Democratic Party, and some royalist landlords (Count György Apponyi, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, L. Bárány, Aladár baráti Huszár, István B. Szabó, Károly Celevalchi, János Csorba, Count János Esterházy, Gusztáv Gratz, Zoltán Horváth, Lajos Makray, Ferenc Nagy, Marquis Alfonz Pallavicini, Marquis György Pallavicini, Count Géza Pálffy, László Révész, Count Antal Sigray, Géza Szüllő, Count László Széchenyi, Béla Szemere, Lajos Szentiványi, Zoltán Tildy, Lajos Váczi, Béla Varga, Count János Zichy, András Házy, János Kövér, István Vásáry, Károly Peyer, Ferenc Szeder and Anna Kéthly). There were good chances for further signatories, but the plan failed when Károly Rassay refused it and the Prince-Primate forbid the episcopate to sign it. Later, some of the signatures were revoked.

As we see, the pro-Western groups of the Hungarian ruling classes—in concert with the Smallholders Party and partly the right-wing social democrats—urged

changes in the domestic and foreign policy of the government *to save Hungary from standing unambiguously on the side of the Axis at the end of the war, but also to prevent any revolutionary development and ensure her a decisive role in the reorganization of Central Europe and especially the Danube Basin after the war.*

Kállay accepted the proposals of the pro-Western groups gradually only. In the autumn of 1942, at a meeting of the so-called *Magyar Élet Pártja* (Party of Hungarian Life), Kállay still emphasized that the guiding principles of his government *"are the same today with respect to both foreign and internal policy..."*. A similar view was expressed in both his Parliamentary address to the Upper House, and in his report to the Cabinet in early January 1943.

Kállay's speech at the party meeting caused a "great sensation and grave anxiety" among certain groups of the ruling classes. "It has been the first occasion for a long time when the right-wing (and not the Left!) received the address of the Prime Minister with reservation. MPs of the Government Party and members of the Upper House gave voice to their deep concern "over a speech of such a tone." As the confidential SDP bulletin put it: "each step rendering retreat more difficult even impossible causes some consternation".

By the autumn of 1942, however, there had already been circumstances indicating that Kállay was willing to allow certain changes. He dismissed Minister of Education Bálint Hóman, and Minister of Defence Károly Bartha known for their pro-German attitude. They were replaced by Jenő Szinnyi Merse and Vilmos Nagybaczoni Nagy, respectively, both faithful to the "traditional Bethlen policy". This move significantly weakened the unconditionally loyal pro-German group within the Cabinet, and thus the most important posts, except for that of the minister of finance, were taken over by Anglo-Saxon oriented ministers. Kállay also beat a retreat in anti-Western war propaganda. In the autumn of 1942, he warned the editors-in-chief of newspapers personally not "to attack the persons of presidents of other states, not even of hostile ones."

Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer went even further at the October 16 session of Parliament when, amidst the applause of the left-wing opposition, he announced: "... we cannot predict how the war will end; no official person can know and state for sure who will win". This statement infuriated the extreme right wing. The draft bill of the Minister of Home Affairs on the reform of the Upper House met with great opposition, because it increased the weight of the conservative Upper House against that of the pro-German Lower House.

In the autumn of 1942, Kállay put the settlement of the relations between the government and the anti-Hitler opposition parties on the agenda, since it was to be feared that the voluntary passivity of the latter would isolate them from their supporters who, in turn, would no longer be held back from extremist, revolutionary actions. Another factor urging a greater "freedom of move" to be given to the above parties was that their leaders wanted to break with Hitler, find a way out of the war and implement their reform ideas together with, and relying on, the government. If, however, the government continued to disregard their proposals and refuse their offers, they would be compelled to turn against it, and

even undertake the "risks inherent in" cooperation with the communists, in order to keep their supporters, gain the confidence of the allied Western Powers, and secure participation in the "reorganization process" after the war. In the autumn of 1942, ever more signs indicated that the Kállay government was looking for a way to establish contacts with the anti-Hitler parties so as to assure "internal peace" and "avoid another 1918".

Events on the front as well as the pressure of the masses impelled the leaders of the Independent Smallholders Party and the Peasant League to gradually give up their tactics of "arms at the order". During the autumn session of Parliament in 1942, for the first time since the declaration of war, from among the representatives of the Smallholders Party not only Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, but Tildy and to a certain extent Ferenc Nagy and Béla Varga, too, took a stand against the policy serving the interests of Germany and against the persecution of the Jews. They also protested against public supply shortages, against the burdens of delivery obligations afflicting the peasants and against extraordinarily high industrial prices.

The fact that Zoltán Tildy defended the SDP and advocated its legality stirred great sensation in Parliament. Some pro-Western politicians and the SDP, also acknowledged this gesture as a sign of the Smallholders Party's willingness to cooperate. Tildy's attitude no doubt reflected the increasing influence of the more realistic leaders of the Smallholders Party and the democratic—as opposed to reactionary—forces within it. However, this willingness to cooperate was directed not only against the Axis, but against left-wing social democratic forces led by the communists, too, and was aimed to secure the party a leading role in a would-be "democratic block". Still, the proposal implied the possibility of a broader national unity.

In the autumn of 1942, the labour movements which had suffered immense losses began to recover. Right-wing leaders of the SDP and the trade unions wanted to make use of this and of the favourable events reported from the front, but they also wanted to hinder all kind of left-wing organizational activity. In order to calm left-wing functionaries and workers anxious about political passivity, they referred to the grave consequences of "bolshevist organization" activity and to the advantages of a "cautious" policy based on "waiting". No doubt, in the summer of 1942, there was a certain danger that the government would ban legal workers' organizations if they continued to gather those who supported a consistent independence policy. Peyer and his supporters, hostile from the very start to the party's gradual shift to the left and the weakening of right-wing leadership, now thought that the workers were taught a good lesson. The time had come for them to see or, if necessary, to be shown where the dominance of a policy "alien" to social democracy might lead the legal labour movement.

In autumn 1942, under the combined effect of foreign and internal events, Kállay had to ease the constraints imposed on the socialist organizations. Party meetings and other programs of the SDP were permitted again. This was the first time in the course of the war that the party's rural organizations were given permission to convene their committees.

The first committee sessions followed with great attention were held at Győr and then at Kolozsvár in October 1942. The speech of Deputy General Secretary Rudolf Pajor left no doubt that the SDP still supported a policy of loyalty to the government. He promised far-reaching support to the government for the implementation of all "measures" aimed at "maintaining order". In return they only demanded to be allowed "... to disseminate their ideas freely among the workers".

Social democratic leaders did their utmost to win the government's confidence. Manó Buchinger, a member of the party leadership, suggested that the leaders of the party express their standpoint in a memorandum. Although Peyer thought this untimely and opposed the proposal, Buchinger prepared the section on foreign policy.

In his summary—made presumably at end-1942—Buchinger emphasized that already before and during the war the SDP and the organized workers had had great merits in ensuring steady production free of disturbances and sabotage actions. It devoted long pages to proving that the leaders had always used their international prestige to further the fulfilment of Hungary's territorial claims, and finally expressed his conviction that, since it would be unrealistic to base Hungary's future on the victory of the Axis powers, the government would do its utmost to fight for advantageous peace conditions. For this end it had to prove that: 1) Hungary did not enter the war wantonly, but was forced to do so by stronger powers; 2) Hungary did not intend to fight until its last soldier for the interests of a great power. The SDP was willing to put its Western connections at the governments' disposal in case the Prime Minister made it possible for the party to "renew its former connections with the representatives or foreign workers' parties and attempt to influence them for the benefit and aims of Hungary". It called the governments' attention to the signs of war fatigue.

The leadership of the SDP knew well that, in return for their greater "freedom of motion" granted them by the Kállay government, they had to accept the role of a gendarmerie delegated against the workers. Buchinger himself acknowledged this in one of his notes, but protested against the assumption that the government wanted to use the party and the trade unions "only as gendarmes".

In the autumn of 1942, Peyer and his followers wished to concentrate primarily on the economic and social griefs instead of the political wrongs of the working class. The Minister of Home Affairs agreed with the announcement and informed Deputy Chief of Police Sombor-Schweinitzer that SDP "agitation and organization" had to be permitted again, provided that it "does not upset law and order". At a meeting held in December, he personally asked county sub-prefects to support "social democratic organizational matters" in the future.

A new feature gained force in the political manifestations of the social democratic leaders: they emphasized that the attention of the organized workers was to be directed to the tasks of "the morrow", "the Hungary of tomorrow" instead of their being dedicated to the struggles of "today". This policy was officially sanctioned by the SDP Congress held in December 1942 with the permission of the government—

the only such instance in the course of the war. Renouncement to the tasks of "today", to active anti-war struggle, and absorption in devising plans for the future—this was the guideline accepted by the SDP. "Time works for us", they kept repeating to calm left-wing functionaries and workers demanding a more courageous and militant stand. General Secretary Ferenc Szeder expressed this policy at the preparatory committee session of the congress: "The authority of the party grows in function of the changes on the front. It is an historical vocation that cannot be risked, but I am convinced that the moment will come when every Hungarian socialist will be proud to wear the badge which he now conceals under his lapel".

The HPC had to begin the reorganization of the party and the independence movement among the above-described circumstances exacerbated by grave blood losses. There is no doubt that the evolution of international and military power relations and partly the revival of the labour movement favoured this work, but still, the dominance of right-wing influence within the independence movement and primarily in the SDP aggravated by the internal political manoeuvres of the Kállay government rendered their task very difficult.

When the arrests came to an end in August 1942, the Central Committee of the HPC was completed, while István Kovács (released after seven and a half years of imprisonment), Pál Tonhauser and István Szirmai (leaders of the communist organizations in Southern Slovakia and Northern Transylvania, respectively) were co-opted to the Secretariat.

The Central Committee analyzed the position, directives and tasks of the party and the lessons of the arrests in passionate debates lasting for several weeks. The results were summed up in a resolution entitled "Lessons of the Arrests" emphasizing that the party gained great respect and a remarkable political and organizational influence—primarily in the trade unions, in the SDP and in the youth organizations—for its efforts to create the popular front and the independence front. The HPC achieved excellent results in strengthening workers' unity, developing the independence movement and uniting all anti-Hitlerite forces, but the resolution also highlighted the methodological faults committed in organizational work which contributed to the arrests. The leaders, and especially the majority of the party membership, cherished illusions generated by the good results as to the legality of the party, and this, in turn, led to a slackening of conspiratory rules.

The summary of the general direction of the party and the tasks of the independence movement were prepared after a long discussion of the Central Committee. The resolution stated that the party persisted in its program of "independent, free, democratic Hungary", and its members were willing "to sacrifice even their lives for the independence of their country and the freedom of the people". The party recognized correctly *that war had entered a novel phase*: "the Axis is forced into the defensive, the Allied Powers had taken over the initiative. At the same time, the offensive of oppressed nations fighting for freedom against the occupying powers is also unfolding gradually". With the evolution of

Hitler's military disaster "the alliance system of the Axis has got looser", and neutral countries shifted towards anti-fascism. Thus, by the autumn of 1942, power relations had changed decisively to the advantage of the anti-fascist allied powers—a shift favouring the consistently anti-Hitlerite section of the anti-fascist world coalition. "Not only would this lead soon to the establishment of the second front, but it would also guarantee that war be continued and peace established in the spirit of progress and not that of imperialist reaction". The deepening crisis of the Axis powers forced Hitler's henchmen to seek "a way out, independent of the fate awaiting Hitlerism".

The resolution highlighted the fact that "the Hungarian monopol-capitalist clique and the Kállay government representing its interests cannot be expected to change their policy *voluntarily*. . . in no situation would they give preference to national interests over their own class interests." The nationalist, imperialist and anti-Semitic propaganda of this clique still had a grip on a great part of the masses which they increased further on seeing Hitler's approaching defeat. "They seek a way out of Hitler's crisis that would prove fatal for them. *A reactionary way out! They focus their endeavours on a single aim: to maintain the reactionary rule of the monopol-capitalist clique over the people of Hungary—whatever way the war ends*". (Italics mine,—I.P.) They recruited masses and partners to help them in this policy, and endeavoured "to degrade the forces of national freedom and struggle to the status of instruments of reaction". The Peyer wing of the SDP wished to help carry out this plan.

What steps had to be taken? The "national front of struggle" had to be reorganized and, led by the working class, it could assemble the peasantry, the national minorities and the progressive intelligentsia, and could provide an organizational framework for all progressive social organizations and political parties, so that "*with joint effort, we can knock the reaction down from its limited basis*". In order to prevent legal workers' organizations from serving reactionary forces, the HPC gave full support to that wing of the SDP and the trade unions which was devoted to class struggle, supported the economic and social demands of the working class and promoted unity of action within the class itself. The progressive wings of the Smallholders Party and the Peasant League had to be activated, and a close relationship established between them and workers' organizations.

The above resolution and the instructions to party members including an analysis of internal and external power relations, a defence of the main directives of party policy and a definition of the tasks lying ahead of the independence movement provided the communists with a firm and secure theoretical background.

In the autumn of 1942 those communists *who had escaped arrests* were contacted again, and the reorganization of party organs began. The Budapest Territorial Committee was reorganized. The party re-established its contacts with several district branches of the SDP—in the 7th, 8th, 9th, and later in the 5th and 13th districts as well as in Pesterzsébet, Pestlőrinc and Kispeszt. Similar relations were established in the trade unions of tailors, unskilled workers, fancy leather-goods'

makers, furriers and construction workers. Party connections were established in several important war factories, including the Ganz Ship Factory, the Hungarian Radiator Factory, the Weiss Manfred Works, the Hungarian State Machine Factory, the Siemens Works, the Ganz Wagon, the Ganz Electricity, the Aeroplane Factory, the Kispeszt Weaving Factory, and the Ruggyanta.

In the second half of 1942, the youth, too, obtained good results. At the end of August, they set up a three-strong illegal youth committee headed by Endre Ságvári. Its task was to seek out young people scattered after the disbanding of the NYC and gather them into illegal organizations and, relying on the cultural and sport organizations of the youth, establish a legal basis for young workers. The Youth Committee of the Ironworkers' Union was set up illegally at the beginning of 1943 and, within a short time, it gained a strong impact on the youth at the Ironworkers' Trade Union Headquarters at Magdolna Street, Reitter Ferenc Street, Angyalföld, Pesterzsébet and Csepel, as well as among the gymnasts of Vasas (Ironworkers). A strong illegal youth group was established in the trade union of non-skilled workers. Young printers established relations with other youth groups in the trade unions of graphic workers, hairdressers and tailors, with the youth of Rákospalota, in the 6th and 8th district, and with members of the Vándor choir.

The members of the reorganized action groups were recruited from among young people and sympathizers involved in illegal work. By the autumn of 1942, these groups had already been working successfully in the factories of Kispeszt, Pesterzsébet, Angyalföld, Óbuda, and in the 9th and 10th districts. At the turn of 1942–43, relations were re-established with university youth organizations. Communists were working at the Györfy College, the Teleki Pál College, and at the National Federation of the Hungarian Israelite University and High School Students (*Magyar Izraelita Egyetemi és Főiskolai Hallgatók Országos Egyesülete*).

At the end of 1942, the communists of Southern Slovakia and Carpathian Ukraine reorganized their ranks. In December, a party committee was formed again at Kassa and party organizations were set up at Kassa and in its vicinity. In the spring of 1943, party organizations were formed at Rozsnyó, Luciabánya, Ungvár, Munkács and in their vicinity, too. To embrace and direct the expanding communist organizations of Southern Slovakia and Carpathian Ukraine, in May 1943, the HPC established its four-strong Felvidék Territorial Secretariat with Pál Tonhauser, a member of the party's Central Committee, as its secretary.

In Northern Transylvania, organizational activity (which had begun just after the arrests in the summer of 1941) yielded good results, too. By the end of 1942, party organizations had been re-established in the Szamos, Kolozsvár, Nagyvárad and Nagybánya areas; the activity was directed by Béla Józsa and István Szirmai as well as those members of the Szamos Provincial Secretariat who had escaped arrest. The party had exceptionally strong organizations in several large factories at Kolozsvár, in the Hungarian Steel Factory, the Belgian-Hungarian Textile Factory, the Tobacco Factory, the Dermata Shoe Factory and in the Kolozsvár branch of the SDP, in the National Labour Centre (*Nemzeti Munkaközpont*) loyal to the regime, and at Nagyvárad, in the Carmen Shoe Factory. At Nagybánya,

active communist cells existed among the miners; there were organizations at Szászrégen, Dés and at other places, too. On the proposal of the HPC Central Committee, in January 1943, a four-strong secretariat, similar to the one in Southern Slovakia, was set up in Transylvania.

The HPC Central Committee sought relations with foreign communist parties as well. At the turn of 1942–1943, János Kádár maintained indirect relations with the Yugoslav and Pál Tonhauser with the Slovak communists.

The party press played an immeasurable role in the reorganization of the party and independence activity. One of the printing machines which had escaped confiscation was at work already in the autumn of 1942. The first pamphlet was issued shortly after Zoltán Schönherz had been murdered, in 30 thousand copies, a high number considering the illegality of the party.

Besides reorganizing the party, the Central Committee concentrated upon breaking isolation and re-establishing relations with its former partners. The reorganized Propaganda Committee of the HPC urged to get into contact with the left-wing press. The most important objective was to restore close cooperation with the editorial board of *Népszava* still led by Szakasits. Gyula Kállai's release from prison and the fact that he started work again created advantageous conditions for this work. Later, a communist group of three-four members (left-wing social democratic Lajos Gosztönyi, Aladár Mód, who returned to the paper, and Géza Losonczy) worked at *Népszava*.

Népszava responded quickly to the favourable change. On each Sunday, for two months (from the end of October on), it published a series of hitherto unknown letters which Kossuth, the leader of the 1848–49 War of Independence, had written in exile. Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was the first bourgeois politician to welcome the initiative of *Népszava* to publish documents of "Hungarian historical thought". Bajcsy-Zsilinszky expressed again his belief in the unity of workers, peasants and intellectuals, because, he said, if that came through, "*Hungary could not be overthrown, not even by the gates of Hell*".

Letters coming from all over the country (some were published) congratulated the editorial board of *Népszava* for publishing articles written in a popular-front spirit. Organized workers from Csepel wrote that, in the course of the past years, the working class had proved its "intellectual broad-mindedness and political maturity, and if the bourgeoisie were willing to undertake consciously the defence of Hungarian national and universal objectives of mankind, then it would fight together with the other two classes of society, the working class and the peasantry, for the elevation of the country".

Already in November, communists made efforts to launch again the independence movement destroyed in the spring of 1942. Relations were re-established with *Magyar Nemzet*, *Mai Nap* and *Újság*. They found their way to Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and, through Gyula Ortutay and Sándor Barcs, to the left wing of the Independent Smallholders Party as well. They managed to get in touch with István Dobi, one of the most consistent and most respected left-wing leaders of the

Smallholders Party, and it was at that time that they succeeded in establishing a connection with the Nobel Prize Professor Albert Szent-Györgyi, too.

The HPC sent a circular to all the public personalities known for seeking a way out. "The very existence of our nation, the future of our country is endangered", the letter written in the autumn of 1942 said, "this is what makes us turn to you". The only possible way out was the union of all progressive anti-German forces.

Radio Kossuth also called to the battle "every patriot—let him belong to any social layer—who disapproves of Kállai's treasonable policy".

Communists working in the villages and led by Ferenc Donáth, Lajos Fehér and Ferenc Iliás fortunately escaped arrest in 1942. Iliás was also Secretary of the National Organizing Committee of the Peasant League, while Lajos Fehér worked for *Kis Újság*; Ferenc Donáth later became a member of the Central Committee of the party. They thought their main task was to strengthen the left wing of the Peasant League and increase the number of those who were fighting for the establishment of the Navvies' Section.

In the summer of 1942 at the general assembly of the Peasant League Ferenc Nagy and his group succeeded in postponing the establishment of the section. Representatives of the poor peasantry launched an action against this policy of "delay". On November 29, 1942, they criticized the whole former activity of the Peasant League in an open letter. "It is lacking life; there is no organizational and cultural activity within the Peasant League. The fact that tens of thousands of peasants, hundreds of reading circles are attached to the League is not enough." They attacked the leaders of the League for concentrating primarily on recruiting rich peasants and trying to hold back the poor peasantry, *one of the most valuable layers in leading the peasantry* and the youth. The mission of the Peasant League "is not to be a flicker of light as all former peasant movements had been". The letter urged to establish a navvies' section in every village where the League had an organization. The open letter set off an avalanche of letters and articles published in the press, which repeatedly demanded the establishment of the navvies' section. However, right-wing leaders of the Peasant League supported by the Minister of Home Affairs still resisted the idea, and robbed thereby the anti-fascist, anti-war organization of the peasants of valuable months.

Right-wing influence prevailed at the 33rd Congress of the SDP on December 13, 1942, and in the festal Christmas issue of *Népszava*, too. Communists and left-wing social democrats endeavoured to persuade some of the delegates to change the opportunist policy line of the SDP. On their initiative, workers sent a flood of letters to the Congress and to the editorial board of *Népszava*, and demanded that the SDP return to the idea of independence and the principles of national unity announced in the 1941 Christmas issues. They demanded that the SDP take a definite stand concerning the country's vital problems, and give voice to the interests of the masses, proving thereby that it was really the party of the workers. "It would be proper—a furrier wrote—if, on the initiative of the party, a resolute cooperation unfolded among all the parties, federations and press organs willing to proceed in the direction of independence. Public opinion needs an elementary shock..." They

demanded moral and financial support for their imprisoned or interned comrades. But the letters did not get publicity neither at Congress nor in *Népszava*.

Already the composition of the Congress was unfavourable for the left wing. Since there was no new election, the delegates of the 1939 Congress were invited. The composition did, however, change, since those left-wingers who would really have represented the interests of the majority of organized workers were missing. Most of them were in prisons, in internment camps, or languishing in companies of refractory soldiers, their places taken by party and trade union members invited by the leadership of the SDP and the trade unions, most of them under right-wing impact. The General Secretary's referatsummed up the main guideline of the SDP in a single sentence: fidelity to a "realistic policy". The only possible aim "in these grave and critical times is to save the party for the time when it must fulfil its historic task", Szeder stated.

Right-wing leaders of the SDP spoke of independence and national unity in a solemn tone, without offering the least suggestion—except for words—as to the realization of their ideas. They repeatedly referred to the distant perspective of socialism, hushed up political and economic problems and tried to avert the attention of the working class from concrete tasks.

The endeavour to curb anti-war struggle was expressed even more clearly in the 1942 Christmas issue of *Népszava*. Similarly to the corresponding number in 1941, it was prepared by the communist and left-wing social democratic editors of the paper, who wanted to renew the idea of national unity and provide the independence front with an organizational framework similar to the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee. However, the right-wing leadership of the SDP intervened, and took over the preparation of the Christmas issue.

The title itself, "Towards the Hungary of Tomorrow", indicated that the special number was to deal not with issues of "today", i.e. anti-war and anti-fascist struggle, independence, and the democratic transformation of the country, but with the future in general, the tasks of the post-war era. The editorial was written once again by Árpád Szakasits, but he, too, offered the pinky dreams of the "future", instead of matters of "today"; plans instead of struggle; mobilization of the spirit instead of deeds; submission to the unchangeable, since "stormy centuries" had taught that "a destroyed country" was always to be rebuilt by the workers, the peasants and the free intelligentsia.

The backbone of the special holiday issue was the circular distributed by right-wing leaders. First of all, right-wing representatives of the SDP and the Smallholders Party expressed their opinions: Károly Peyer, Ferenc Szeder, Sándor Karácsony, Rudolf Gyürey, Ferenc Nagy, Zoltán Tildy and others who, a year before, ostentatiously disassociated themselves from the left-wing issue. The answers were unanimous in their effort to direct the attention of the masses towards post-war tasks.

However, the left wing could not be silenced entirely. Left-wing social democratic and communist journalists answered in the spirit of the 1941 Christmas issue. They preached the unity of forces, supported the idea of national unity and independence

and, instead of dreams and plans, urged concrete actions. In his article—entitled "Hungarian Problems"—Lajos Gosztonyi stated correctly that "the front of freedom . . . is not a group of highfalutin day-dreamers who just ponder without deeds about a new Hungary, but a union whose members *undertake* work, even struggle if necessary; who can and want to work for the elevation of an independent Hungary and her people". Transylvanian communist writer István Nagy took a definite stand against the "delayers" and those who "want to postpone struggle". He urged to make better use of the possibilities of action in all fields of public life. "This will not be a period of peace, but a time for struggle. Struggle against those who want to destroy our confidence in ourselves and those who are ready to sacrifice the country to defend their false and wrong ideas".

It was evident from left-wing articles that they considered cooperation narrowed down to the elaboration of plans for the future and excluding anti-war and anti-fascist struggle harmful. The elaboration of a scenario for the future was, of course, deemed necessary, provided that it should mobilize for struggle already *today*, instead of preaching demobilization. István Nagy made a concrete proposal for organized cooperation. He suggested to prepare and convene a national meeting attended by workers, peasants and the intelligentsia.

In his article "Village Letters" Gyula Kállai drew the following general conclusions (greatly resembling the ideas of István Nagy) from peasants' letters published in *Szabad Szó*: people must prepare for their post-war tasks today since "*the circumstances of the reconstruction depend upon their present work*". Kállai strongly emphasized that the political, economic and cultural rise of the peasantry cannot be separated from the interests of national independence and a broad national unity.

Even Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky supported the idea of ensuring a firm internal order to avoid "internal crisis" and revolution, similarly to right-wing leaders of the SDP and the Independent Smallholders Party, but while the former wanted to put the masses off and postpone urgent social issues with promises pertaining to the future, to the morrow, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, on the contrary, wanted to confront these issues.

The response of workers and intellectuals to the Christmas issue of 1942 fell far behind their reaction in the previous year. The letters showed that workers welcomed this new instance of the united appearance of independence forces, but they stressed how wrong it would be to wait instead of setting out to solve the tasks at once.

Until the end of 1942, anti-fascist forces could not overcome the crisis caused by the serious blows to the HPC and the elimination of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee. In the second half of the year, the HPC and those cooperating with it could only restore their ranks and establish contacts with other parties, organizations and persons working for the independence movement in 1941–1942. It was beyond their power to launch a new independence movement to replace the one destroyed at the time of the arrests. Therefore, though the resistance movement still fought against Hitler, for independence and national unity, it gave

up its efforts to mobilize the masses, and opposed revolutionary transformation. The HPC recognized this danger in time and did its utmost to fight it, knowing that if opportunist policy were to gain a stronger influence on workers, peasants and the intelligentsia suffering the grave terror, Hungary would not be able to escape catastrophe.

Thus, by the end of 1942, the failure of organizing an anti-fascist national unity front had been exacerbated by the gradual development of a trend disrupting the independence movement.

IV. Struggle of the Hungarian Party of Communists to Eliminate the Save-the-Regime Policy, to Rally National Forces and to Achieve a Separate Peace Treaty

IV. 1. The Impact on the Working Masses of the Soviet Army's Victories at Stalingrad and Voronezh

With the Stalingrad battle, events on the Eastern Front and World War II as a whole took a new turn. The extraordinary series of victory of the Soviet Army began on November 19, 1942, and came to end on February 1, 1943, with the surrender of the 6th and 11th German Army at Stalingrad. Parallel with the Stalingrad military operations, the entire Soviet front was set in motion. The Soviet Army launched a large-scale attack from Velikie Luki to the Caucasus. At Leningrad, the Soviet troops broke through the German blockade. *This was the first step of driving the occupiers out from the land of the Soviet Union.*

The Stalingrad victory played a decisive part in the unfolding crisis of the fascist block. It strengthened anti-fascist world coalition, increased the international prestige of the Soviet Union and its relative weight within the anti-fascist coalition: not only was the country capable of defending itself, but it could smite the enemy, and even destroy the aggressor. At the same time, American, British and French troops expelled the enemy from the territory of Northern Africa, with the exception of Tunis.

As a result of the above victories, both partisan struggle and the anti-fascist liberation movement strengthened in the occupied countries. The conditions necessary for the destruction of Germany and its satellites were present.

The Soviet victory had a great impact on the Hungarian working masses and significantly influenced the policy of the Hungarian ruling classes, speeding up their sharpening internal contradictions. It also contributed to the development of the so-called "see-saw" or "save-the-regime" policy pursued by the Kállay government. The fact that the blow given to the fascist coalition had a direct impact on Hungary strengthened the effect of the Stalingrad events.

The Second Hungarian Army, very badly supplied with arms, clothes and food, decimated since the summer of 1942, and deteriorated morally took up defence at the Voronezh frontline in a width of 200 kilometres, and was attacked by the Soviet troops on January 12, 1943. In the course of the fight the Second Hungarian Army was completely destroyed. Together with the fresh units sent to the front in November, there were c. 230 000 Hungarian soldiers there. From among them 120 000 were killed, frozen to death, wounded or captured. The 50 000 subsidiary troops and forced labour troops serving with the Second Hungarian Army suffered

even greater losses; according to the Minister of Defence, only 6-7000 people survived. The financial loss was about 367 million pengős. This meant that the only more or less combat-worthy Hungarian army had been destroyed.

This was a grave shock for the Hungarian government absorbed in the outcome of the military operations at Stalingrad and in Africa. The Kállay government wanted to keep secret at all costs the German defeats and especially the destruction of the Second Hungarian Army. However, those who listened to Radio Kossuth, to the Hungarian broadcasts of the Moscow Radio or the BBC were informed about the catastrophe in the first days after the defeat. The Hungarian people learned the entire truth from a March pamphlet of the HPC.

On January 21, Miklós Kállay was obliged to give a short account of the military situation to dissolve "hostile rumours" in his party and especially among the people. The Prime Minister assured the members of his party that although the losses exceeded all previous ones, they were still far from the numbers broadcast by hostile programs. However, all the efforts of the ruling circles failed. No letters arrived from the front; letters and parcels were banned; the return of soldiers on holiday was postponed again and again. These facts convinced even those who used to believe the government that the "rumours" had to be true.

Letters flooded into various state and military organs, and even the government. "Why are we not allowed to know where we stand? Parents, brothers, children, wives are anxiously awaiting the news." Several letters demanded information concerning the exact nature of the cruelties committed by the Germans against the retreating soldiers of the Second Hungarian Army. Sándor Raffay, bishop of the Nagybánya church district, wrote that the deeds of the German soldiers "outrage our Hungarian self-respect, and honesty". The bishop urged Kállay to draw the necessary conclusions and decide whether it was still possible to cooperate with the Germans.

Despite the fact that all possible counter-measures had been taken, the arrival of the wounded soldiers of the Second Hungarian Army further increased the anti-war atmosphere. Stories of their experiences reached the whole country.

The majority of the population grew ever more sceptical about the "victorious ending of the war"; the anti-German mood strengthened. War fatigue was coupled with peace demands. In early 1943, both Propaganda Minister István Antal (addressing a meeting at Koložsvár), and State Secretary for Justice Miklós Bonczos (at a Szarvas meeting of the Party of Hungarian Life) warned against increasing peace demands. According to Bonczos, "the nuisances, hardships, and sufferings caused by the long war created *an irrational longing for peace that we must fight. We pray not for the war to end, for peace to come, but for victory*".

Because of the burdens of the war and various other measures, dissatisfaction increased. Bread, flour, fat, meat and potato rations decreased; there was a shortage of clothing articles and fuel, and a rapid deterioration of quality. Wages stagnated, while prices rose continuously. The militarization of the factories together with the localization of workers, the 10-12 hour workday, the introduction of extra-shifts in mines had grave consequences. Owing to growing work intensity

and the unlimited power of factory commanders, the situation of workers became ever more intolerable.

The poor peasantry was badly hit by fixed wages, compulsive work in agriculture, the significant increase of work intensity and hours, the gradual introduction of military supervision of the workers of large estates, and the shortages of food, clothing and shoes.

Small and middle peasants (and partly wealthy farmers, too) were especially struck by the system of non-progressive produce delivery (associated with the name of Béla Jurcsek and introduced in 1943). The produce of small peasants, often their ration as well, were bought at an extremely low price. At the same time, big landowners—because the cadestral net income of their estates was generally fixed at a low level—were obliged to deliver much less produce from the same territory than small peasants. They were even given high premium for anything they sold above the level of the compulsory delivery. Four-fifth of the obligatory produce delivery burdened farms under c. 200 hectares (100 "holds"), while only one-fifth came from larger estates, although more than 40 per cent of all lands belonged to the latter type. Peasants were further charged with permanently rising land and house taxes, the requisition of animals, and frequent and forced transport of soldiers. Middle and big farmers had to fight increasing labour shortage, too.

Despite the frequent increases of salaries, the situation of intellectuals and civil servants got worse. "Despite the salary increases of the near past, civil servants cannot keep pace with the price changes of basic commodities" the Hódmezővásárhely Chief of Police stated. "As for clothing, their situation is already critical."

The situation of the national minorities in Hungary and the territories annexed to it after the expansion was even worse than that of the Hungarian masses (with the exception of the German national minority). The wages and the food and clothes supplies of the national minorities of the annexed territories were even further behind those of the population of the "motherland". Their economic and political struggles were oppressed by the most ruthless terror, imprisonment, forced labour, and front service. It is no accident that the independence movement unfolded most rapidly and achieved greatest success there.

In the first half of 1943, on the basis of front events, war burdens and the work of communists, left-wing social democrats and trade union stewards, a general wage movement developed in mines and war factories all over the country; while in the first stage of the war such activity had taken place mainly in small plants and in the light industry, from the end of 1942, and especially after the Stalingrad battles, they spread to the large factories as well.

The situation of the miners was probably the worst. Owing to the fast increase of war-industrial production and the needs of the new war factories and the railways, another three-quarter million tons of coal had to be produced in 1943. The coal mines could not meet this demand, and necessarily landed in a crisis owing to the inadequacy of mining techniques, the ruthless exploitation of the mines, lasting labour shortage and the sending of skilled but "unreliable" miners to the front.

Apart from industrial production, the crisis was also felt in the fuel supply of the population. This further enhanced the dissatisfaction of the workers. The authorities still wished to increase the output by intensifying work and employing ever-new labour force, especially companies of forced labourers. In the summer of 1942, miners' paid holidays were cancelled, and from the beginning of 1943 Saturday night and Sunday work-shifts were gradually introduced in all the mines. Growing work intensity was coupled with a permanent deterioration of food supplies.

The first miners' strike broke out on March 10, 1943, at the Sajóbáony coal pit; the example was followed at the pits of the Almásvölgy Coal Mining Company on March 11. There was a strike at the Nagymányok pit of the Salgótarján Coal Mine in April and another one on April 3 at the Mecsekszabolcs pit. On May Day, two thousand miners denied work at the pits in the vicinity of Pécs.

Other forms of miners' protest were large-scale absence from and frequent changes of work-place. "The miner works when he knows or sees that the boss is near—they wrote from Tatabánya—otherwise he slows down as much as he can." Reports coming from the mining areas to the Ministry of Home Affairs warned that loosening work discipline increasingly endangered production.

In the autumn of 1942, the wage movement reached one of the largest war factories, the Ganz & Co. Electric Machine, Wagon and Ship Factory. Similar activity was reported from the Soroksár weaving factory and strikes from the Láng Factory. A summary report by Sombor-Schweinitzer dated early April 1943 stated: "there is a certain unrest in industry, especially among ironworkers, because of hourly wages. . . . Certain elements exploit this situation for propaganda purposes and generate disturbance and unrest among the workers of large factories". Similar phenomena were reported from Győr by the Lord Lieutenant, from Diósgyőr and Székesfehérvár by the chiefs of police.

Wage movements were strongest in the rural factories. In February 1943, workers demanded higher wages at the Pécs Sopianae Machine Factory and Ironworks and at Andor Sebők's Metal and Locksmith Goods Factory. Later the movement was joined by workers of the First Pécs Leather Factory, the Hammerli Gloves Factory, and the Spinnet and Turul Gloves Factories. Their demands were met.

In April and May, according to the reports, the dissatisfaction of war-factory workers increased further. A German in charge of the Perutz Textile Factory at Pápa employing more than a thousand workers wrote the following: "If the masses will not be helped somehow, their spiritual transformation will continue, and may lead to an explosion at any moment, on the occasion of a smaller disturbance or any manifestation of dissatisfaction."

A whole series of preventive measures were introduced to put an end to dissatisfaction. First left-wing workers "branded as unreliable from the point of view of state security" were removed from war factories. "Strike order", a resolution of the Government Commissioner, allowed army corps headquarters to call up people to prevent strikes.

The most comprehensive movement for higher wages developed at the strongly organized factories (employing many left-wing workers and under considerable communist influence) of Diósgyőr, the second largest industrial settlement of the country. It was initiated by the communists of the factories and the local Ironworkers' Union. On May 28, 1943, all the workers of the C-plant (some 700–800 according to "official data") marched to the director's office and sent in a delegation with their demands. The police report emphasized that "the workers can no longer be calmed by promises; it is absolutely necessary to remedy their financial situation immediately and fundamentally. . . ." In his letter to the Minister of Home Affairs, the Lord Lieutenant of the county also urged definite action: "A serious and just wage adjustment is necessary; moreover, provocative communist elements must be set aside". For fear of bigger demonstrations and the spreading of the movement to other factories, the Minister of Industry raised wages by 30 per cent.

In this period, the dissatisfaction of the workers manifested itself not so much in political, but rather in economic demands, and in an isolated form. At places where the initiative was taken by either an underground communist group or a local trade union leadership ready to undertake struggle, the economic struggle had grown and in due course acquired a political character, too. The movements indicated that workers, and especially miners, hoped for a movement embracing the whole country, and they already considered the changes for such a movement. A great lot depended on whether the leaders of the workers would be capable and willing to lead the movement, or whether they could and would raise it onto a political level, or decided to keep it down, depriving thereby the anti-war movement of its prime mover.

In the spring of 1943, the poor peasantry fought against fixed wages and for the reduction of compulsory work. Both the agrarian proletariat and the poor peasantry tried, therefore, to sabotage the conclusion of labour permits.

In order to prevent this move, in April 1943, the Ministry of Agriculture set up a so-called Ad-hoc Agricultural Control Staff (*Rögtönzött Mezőgazdasági Vezető Törzs*) whose task was to ensure steady agricultural work and to put under military leadership farms where discipline slackened, or where escapes or occasional strike actions necessitated intervention.

Despite these stringent measures, the labour force demands of agriculture could not be met. Most agrarian proletarians *had to be forced to go to work by call-up papers* even in counties with redundant labour force. On large estates, workers defended themselves against the "hostile circumstances" by *continuously reducing their performance*. From the early spring of 1943, smaller strikes became more frequent. At harvest and threshing, the ministers blamed each other for the disastrous state of agriculture. Defence Minister Csatay blamed the Minister of Home Affairs and the administrative authorities for the steady growth of the number of escapes, strikes and stoppages of work. The Minister of Agriculture urged that the Minister of Home Affairs intern at once those workers who figured in the reports of the economic inspectors. On September 8, a report of the Ad-hoc Agricultural Control

Staff stated that the most important summer agricultural works had got done "solely" because of military interference.

The produce delivery system introduced by Juresek smothered small and middle farmers, and partly even the richer ones. Even the National Agricultural Chamber and the Independent Smallholders Party protested against it, and suggested that it be changed. Communist pamphlets called on everyone to deny compulsory produce delivery. The government attempted to prevent "black threshing", the hiding of cereals and the sabotage of compulsory produce delivery by a very strict control of threshing and by envisaging retaliatory measures.

From the spring of 1943 on, increasing dissatisfaction and economic struggle had already caused serious difficulties for the government's war policy. Parallel with the economic struggle—and under the impact of the turn in the war events—the *political activity* and interest of the workers and primarily of the working class itself *increased*. However, the legal opposition parties did not support the fermentation of the masses, although that would have been necessary for the national resistance to achieve good results in the spring of 1943.

IV. 2. Foreign and Home Policy of the Kállay Government in the First Half of 1943

The changed military situation at the turn of 1942 and 1943 compelled Kállay and his supporters to seek a way out of the war doomed to failure, in keeping with the advice and example of the Western-oriented bourgeois groups. That marked the beginning of Kállay's "see-saw", or "save-the-regime" policy.

Kállay and the Western-oriented groups of the ruling classes presumed that, after Germany's defeat, the fate of Central and East Europe would be determined by British and American policy, while the Soviet Union would hardly have a say in it. The essence of their policy was, therefore, to continue war on the side of Germany and against the Soviet Union and to take steps, meanwhile, to enter into relations with the Western Allied Powers, so that Hungary might choose a favourable moment to step out of the war. This Kállay announced in his address to the Foreign Relations Committee of the Lower House on February 19, 1943: "War against the West is not in the interest of Hungary; the point for us is war in the East. . . ." In the first half of 1943, American and especially British plans, diplomatic and other attempts, endowed Kállay's political endeavours with some reality.

From the autumn of 1942 onwards, a series of plans—referred to primarily in the British press, but also in various statements of emigrant leaders and governments of Central and South Eastern European countries in London—spoke about creating, out of the countries of the Balkans and Central Europe, a so-called "sanitary zone" against the Soviet Union. Hungarian government circles followed these plans with keen interest, and although first they disassociated themselves from them, by the beginning of 1943 they already welcomed every solution that might be advantageous for Hungary.

Even bigger attention was devoted to the plans of the Western Allied Powers to invade Italy and eventually the Balkans, an idea that was at the basis of Kállay's new foreign political concept. In January 1943, at the time of the disastrous news from the Eastern Front, a new "gleam of hope" shone from Africa. In mid-January 1943, Churchill and Roosevelt conferred in North-African Casablanca. On Churchill's proposal, an agreement was accepted that in 1943 they launch an attack against the fascist coalition in the South, in Italy and on the Balkans, and not in the West.

Western-oriented groups understood the true meaning of these plans. In an article on January 30, the government's semi-official paper, *Függetlenség*, evaluating the Casablanca meeting, wrote the following: "From a military point of view, the most advantageous points for the West to attack Germany are France, Italy or the Balkans. The selection of the direction, however, has a political significance; therefore, it must be decided *which direction would increase most British influence over the eventual political consequences of the battles going on now on the Eastern Front*".

In the spring of 1943, Kállay decided to take concrete measures. András Frey, foreign political editor of *Magyar Nemzet*, together with university professors Dr Ferenc Vály and Albert Szent-Györgyi, and information officer László Veress among others, were sent to Turkey to establish relations with the British and American governments and start negotiations with them.

The standpoint of the Hungarian government was the following: the army will not take part in military manoeuvres against the British and the Americans and will not resist occupation by the British and American regular troops; however, if such were the case, it would willingly turn against the Germans, but the Hungarian government will not carry out an independent action against the Germans.

However, the talks had no great importance, for it was soon clear from Kállay's messages that the Hungarian government was not really preoccupied with *turning against the Germans*, nor did it want to clarify the military details of a break-away, but *wanted to secure a guarantee that the 1943 Hungarian borders would be acknowledged*. This they considered the precondition of all further negotiation. It turned out, however, that the British government did not consider Kállay a potential political figure of the future.

The results of the inquiring negotiations, however, were a source of disappointment for Kállay and the Western-oriented groups, a fact exacerbated by other factors, too. They counted upon British reactionary forces, wishing to establish relations with the right wing of the anti-fascist coalition. The Western press and the public manifestations of leading statesmen, however, showed little understanding towards Hungary's entry into the war, and did not comply with the country's alleged status as "bastion of the West". They criticized ever more frequently and sharply the social structure of Hungary, and made use of every possible occasion to make the Hungarian government understand that its troops had to be withdrawn from the Eastern Front.

In the spring of 1943, there were no signs of the Hungarian government's

willingness to break with Hitler and end the war. Kállay still met virtually all the German demands. True, the Hungarian government did not replace the destroyed Second Hungarian Army on the Eastern Front—nor did the Germans demand them to do so. On the other hand, in the spring of 1943, urged by the Germans, Kállay sent two divisions to the East to maintain public order, and thus the number of the Hungarian troops—even after the withdrawal of the remnants of the Second Army—still reached one hundred thousand. Kállay agreed to recruit another ten thousand for the SS from among the Germans living in Hungary.

In 1943 economic demands prevailed, and Kállay complied with everything, provided that the interests of the country, i.e. those of the Hungarian ruling classes, permitted him to do so. Most Hungarian raw materials (oil, bauxite, aluminous earth, manganese), the bulk of the products of war industry (80 per cent of it by their own admission), and the whole agricultural “excess” migrated to Germany. In May 1943, even German Economic Minister Clodius spoke highly of Hungarian-German economic cooperation: “It is a fact that in no other country were Wehrmacht orders carried out so well as in Hungary... in the field of economy, the attitude of the Hungarian government gives no cause for serious complaint”.

Hitler, however, was not satisfied with Kállay. Germany's shaken military, economic and political position did not permit that its partners loosen their ties with her. In April 1943, after Mussolini and Antonescu, Horthy, too, was summoned to Hitler. Hitler firmly protested over the peace-feelers carried out by the Kállay government, and demanded that Kállay be removed. He instructed Horthy to deal severely with the “destructive atmosphere” in Hungary and demanded the *Endlösung*. After his return, Horthy refused the “accusations” in a letter, but although he ensured the Führer of his loyalty, he did not manage to dissolve his distrust.

Parallel with the German pressure, the activity of extreme right-wing groups had grown. The General Staff urged to meet German demands concerning the troops occupying the Balkans refused earlier by the Government.

After the Voronezh defeat, Imrédy and his supporters demanded to convene the Foreign Relations Committee of the Lower House, hoping to turn public opinion against the government by blaming it for the defeat. But Kállay refused to be taken in, and chose the much less dangerous inter-party meeting instead.

However, Imrédy and those around him did achieve some success. In early April, at the time of the re-elections of Parliamentary personnel and committees, social democratic Géza Malasits and Zoltán Tildy, and Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, MPs of the Smallholders Party, were all ousted, with the help of the Party of Hungarian Life, from the Defence Force Committee (*Véderőbizottság*). By that time, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and Károly Peyer had already been removed from the Foreign Relations Committee.

The session of the Lower House—convened after a three-month interval—was a serious trial for the government, almost bringing about its downfall. Imrédy and his circle demanded that the reasons of the Voronezh catastrophe and government

policy in general be discussed. They registered an interpellation against the activity of Defence Minister Vilmos Nagybacsoni Nagy known for his pro-Western sentiments. Kállay and his circle could not dodge these demands and the government was saved from total failure by a mere nine votes. This result revived the activity of the extreme right wing, which now prepared for a new attack. For fear of possible defeat, Kállay asked Horthy to suspend the Parliamentary session. Horthy fulfilled his request, and on May 4, the Parliamentary session was postponed for an indefinite time.

On May 5, 33 MPs of the National Socialist Party Federation for Hungarian Revival (*Magyar Megújulás Nemzetiszocialista Pártszövetség*), led by extreme right-wing Imrédy, sent a memorandum to the Governor urging a return to consistent pro-German policy, the final settling of the Jewish question, and the foundation of a right-wing coalition directed by the extreme right. The *Endlösung* meant the implementation of the anti-Jewish laws adopted in 1938–39 (withdrawal of political rights and labour permits), and the beginning of the “liquidation” of the Jews.

Horthy refused the demands of Imrédy and his group, since he wanted to keep the Kállay government in office. In order to dissolve the distrust of the Germans and disarm Imrédy and his circle, pro-Western Lipót Baranyai, President of the National Bank, a prominent opponent of the Minister of Finance, was removed. Minister of Industry József Varga also resigned from his post. In early May, Kállay tried to ward off the attacks by dismissing Defence Minister Vilmos Nagybacsoni Nagy and appointing Colonel-General Lajos Csátay, less antipathetic for the Germans.

On May 29, 1943, at a meeting of the Party of Hungarian Life (its Budapest organizations and those in the capital's vicinity), Kállay at last outlined his “see-saw” policy publicly. In his address lasting for several hours there was not one sentence in praise of the Germans. The Prime Minister endeavoured to speak in a way which would irritate Hitler and his Hungarian supporters the least, but would tell the West and Western-oriented circles within the country that his government wanted to put an end to its unilateral obligations. He took great care to demonstrate that neither his regime nor his government could be blamed for waging war alongside Germany. He no longer harangued about a voluntarily entry to the war, but kept affirming that Hungary acted under pressure. The Hungarian government got involved in the war not out of selfish interests, but because of its principles dictating to defend Western culture, Christianity, and humanism, to save humanity and struggle against bolshevism.

He harangued about “reconciliation”, “understanding”, “the importance of cooperation”, and offered a friendly hand to the neighbouring countries without forgetting, however, that the Hungarian nation was to play a leading role in the Danube Basin. He emphasized the country's “just share” of all territories taken away at Trianon: “a thousand years of possession vs. some twenty years of possession...”

Kállay's address was, no doubt, a surprise to the Germans, and even more so to the West. In his memoirs Kállay described its impact as follows: "I was surprised myself. . . The press discussed it in detail, not only in the neutral countries, but also in those countries of the West which were involved in the war, the United States, for instance, and commented upon it as if it were an anti-war statement. Leading Hungarian politicians, István Bethlen, Kálmán Kánya, Károly Rassay and Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky among others, came to me one after the other to express their recognition and satisfaction. The German press, on the other hand, did not write a single word about my address." The newspapers of the left-wing parties welcomed the address, and *Népszava* acknowledged it as a positive manifestation. The address, however, was not followed by deeds. The double-dealing policy damaged seriously the unfolding unity of anti-Hitlerite forces, and contributed significantly to the fact that anti-fascist resistance and all armed actions became abortive.

Kállay's concept was built around a single aim: to save the regime, to avoid another 1918, avoid war, collapse, and another opportunity for a bourgeois and socialist revolution. Therefore, he tried to hinder the collapse of state power and the activation of the masses, and tried to protect the regained territories. All his manifestations envisage most severe measures against communists and against the popular front led by them.

In March 1943, a joint committee was set up from the leading bodies of the Ministries of Defence and Home Affairs presided by Keresztes-Fischer "to launch a general investigation of the communist movement" and to elaborate joint action.

The staff of the gendarmerie and the police was increased and on February 9 a rapid-moving, 500-strong gendarmerie battalion was set up for this special purpose. 50 reserve officers and 23 600 men were placed under the authority of the Ministry of Home Affairs as reserve forces of the gendarmerie and the police. The Chief of General Staff set up another 12 guard regiments—2000 officers and 44 000 troops—to maintain public security. In the second half of 1943, voluntary auxiliary police squads were organized.

Kállay deployed his entire propaganda apparatus to subdue the anti-war and anti-regime atmosphere prevailing among the masses. The government tried to inject fresh stamina into the people and primarily into the public opinion of the bourgeoisie and *petite bourgeoisie* that Trianon had been the result of the revolutions of 1918 and 1919. They repeated stubbornly that, had state power remained stable in 1918, had the ruling classes kept power in their hands, had the country maintained its armed forces, and the "mob" failed to seize power, the thousand-year-old borders would have remained intact. In 1943, Kállay kept proving that the two situations were similar. Both the successes of the Soviet Union and the territorial claims of the neighbouring countries against Hungary warned that only firm state power supported by a broad "national union" might hold up "the ultimate destruction threatening the country", i.e. "the victory of bolshevism" and lead the country out of the war. Government circles could count on the support of the Hungarian Churches. The nearer the Soviet Army, the more it was emphasized in Church newspapers and episcopal letters that it was necessary to

fight bolshevism, to avoid revolution, and support internal peace and the government.

Kállay hoped that social demagoguery would yield significant results. At the February 23 session of the Cabinet, he proposed "to draft a series of social laws". The Hungarian government had to accept that "by the end of the war, a spirit of social transformation will prevail". In these hard times "the attention of the country has to be diverted by social reforms". Horthy dealt with similar plans, as revealed in his correspondence with Kállay. He thought of carrying out certain, mainly demagogic, agrarian measures. Among other things, he mentioned the idea of setting up a land distributing ministry. Kállay opposed violently Horthy's intentions, the same as the whole Cabinet did Kállay's social proposals. Although Kállay showed more restraint concerning "social issues" afterwards, he did not give up his plan.

On June 28, 1943, Kállay set forth his "new economic policy" in the framework of the above "social program" at the General Assembly of the National Alföld Committee (*Országos Alföldi Bizottság*) held at Szeged. The program promised "social equality", higher wages, good public administration, the breaking down of the black market, an increase of wheat prices, and the distribution of expropriated Jewish lands and also those which were to be expropriated. In the framework of the "new economic policy", the government increased wages in war factories from July 1st by 30 per cent, and by a maximum of 20 per cent in other factories and in agriculture.

What was the real significance of the above measures? Between September 1939 and September 1943—according to official statistics—the price of beef increased by 187 per cent, that of pork by 283 per cent, that of milk by 218 per cent, and that of fuel wood by 179 per cent. The prices of clothing articles underwent a similar increase. The price of second-class men's clothes grew by 201 per cent, children's clothes by 214 per cent, men's shirts by 261 per cent, men's shoes by 180 per cent. Fees of public services and rents underwent a similar increase.

The foreign and internal policy pursued by Kállay in early 1943 generated certain illusions in bourgeois and petty bourgeois circles fearing their private property from the Soviet Union and the communists, and having an eye to the West. The atmosphere of stirred-up nationalist propaganda contributed to the belief of the above layers in Hungarian cultural superiority, their "prerogatives" among the peoples of the Danube Basin. Moreover, they pleased themselves in the role of defenders of Christianity and the West. Those thinking more realistically realized that waging war on the German side would have to be paid for once, but they feared Hitler, and even more the necessary sacrifices of a "breakaway". However, government policy—according to Kállay himself—would indubitably have had a lesser impact on the masses if the Prime Minister had not succeeded in gaining the support of the bourgeois wing of the independence movement and of some of the right-wing leaders of the Independent Smallholders Party and SDP having a relatively greater trustworthiness among the masses than the government.

IV. 3. Anti-Hitlerite Left-Wing Parties and Organizations in the First Half of 1943

In the wake of the changes of international power relations, debates in the SDP and in the trade unions focused upon the events on the Eastern Front, i.e. Soviet victories and Hitler's defeat. Stalingrad was an immense shock for the right-wing leaders of the SDP, but while the majority of the organized workers hoped to get encouragement from the East, right-wing leaders concentrated on British and American military operations in the Mediterranean region.

Right-wing social democrats also wanted Hitler's defeat and trusted in the win of the anti-fascist coalition, but they feared the Soviet Union. They recognized that the Soviet Union was the prime mover of the relentless struggle against fascist Germany, and saw the connection between the successes of the Soviet army and the fast increase of resistance in fascist-occupied countries. They also saw that the communists were the most consistent fighters of the resistance everywhere. Their anti-communist sentiments, however, were so strong that they saw the Soviet Union and communism primarily as the exporter of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the "bolshevist regime", and not as the best guarantee of eliminating fascism. They wanted to fight Hitler's fascism and neutralize the main body of anti-fascist struggle at the same time.

The restoration of the independence movement and the unfolding of a radical anti-Hitler movement meant a double danger for them: 1) it could cause retortion by Hitler and the Hungarian extreme Right, and could lead to German occupation; 2) it could reach a stage beyond the power of not only the government, but also the leaders of the Social Democratic Party and the Smallholders Party, in which case there would be little hope to avoid "fatal events" resembling those of 1919. Since an independent step against the policy of the government would have been *possible only if the masses were mobilized*, they rather renounced action and waited for the initiative to be taken by the government. That is how they fell in the trap of Kállay's see-saw policy and became obstacles in the way of the unfolding Hungarian resistance.

The Kállay government, the bourgeois wing of the independence movement, the right wings of the Smallholders Party and the Social Democratic Party all agreed to support a British-American occupation, to avert an eventual German occupation, and to avoid any revolutionary development. From the spring of 1943, the propaganda and activity of right-wing social democrats followed these principles.

In the spring of 1943, SDP committee sessions, party meetings, trade union stewards' and leadership meetings followed one another. After many years of "forced inactivity", the organized workers were looking forward to these meetings with great expectations. The Police Chief of the Diósgyőr Iron Works, for instance, reported that "an excitement impossible to explain and to understand gripped the workers" prior to the meeting.

The leadership, however, strived for the central subject of the committee sessions to be the memento of 1918-1919. In his Csongrád speech, General Secretary Ferenc

Szeder kept refusing those who urged a "more radical policy", stating that the SDP was not the party of revolution, of struggle on the barricades. According to the report of the Szombathely Police Chief, Sándor Millok stated that one of the objectives of the committee sessions was to prevent events like those on March 21, 1919. Similar statements were made at party meetings in the capital and elsewhere; the draft program of the SDP, prepared in May, and the debates following it, also reflected similar ideas.

Those addressing the meetings sharply attacked the extreme Right, the Arrow Cross movement, and right-wing workers' organizations. They were not sparing of hard words when they criticized the government's economic policy, and always stressed that they disagreed with the government's policy. These series of high-sounding clichés were not followed by deeds. They wanted to limit the increasing economic struggle of the workers to petitions submitted to factory leaders, ministries and the government. They made a harmful suggestion to the masses: the government would do its utmost for the workers if they, in turn, helped to improve the grave situation the government was in by their discipline and by ensuring undisturbed production. The editorial written by Károly Peyer for the 40th anniversary of the trade unions reflected the same idea: "The fate of the masses will not be decided by clamorous, immature prattlers lacking all experience, but by the masses themselves inspired by a sense of responsibility and the knowledge that welfare can only be established by work, by doing one's duty".

Why did the left-wing masses fail to enforce their claims on the leadership? There were several reasons. In the first half of 1943, the radicals had not recovered yet from the grave defeat of 1942; the HPC could not unite and mobilize workers demanding an active anti-fascist policy. The right-wing leaders of the SDP tried to hold off radical elements from the leading posts of the party and the trade unions. They used administrative and police measures against workers who were not willing enough to understand the "harmfulness" of radical policy. "We know well the grave foreign political situation we are in; therefore, we take great care of the interests of our country at the political meetings. . .", Peyer and Szeder wrote in a letter to Keresztes-Fischer, Minister of Home Affairs. "*The great interests which are indubitably at stake in the war oblige us to keep silent sometimes even about issues which should be spoken about openly and definitely*". (Italics mine,—I.P.)

The political endeavours of right-wing leaders were received benevolently by certain government members and also by the authorities which no longer believed blindly in German victory. The police headquarters and certain town potentates kept molesting the members and leadership of rural organizations, while on the other hand, they warmly welcomed social democratic leaders coming from the capital. Sharp disputes between the authorities and the appointed lecturers became ever more rare.

On March 31, 1943, Miklós Horthy received Károly Peyer, General Secretary of the Trade Union Council. In the course of the meeting taking place in a "cordial atmosphere", Peyer told Horthy that the SDP wished to take part in the "national task" of leading the country out of war. Horthy said he would expect firm support

from the party and the trade unions to ensure internal order and undisturbed production. The issue of establishing relations between the SDP and the British Labour Party was raised, too. Peyer offered that the SDP would inform in a memorandum the British Labour Party of Hungary's situation in the war and of the relationship between the government and the left-wing opposition, if the government thought so. Horthy was pleased with the plan and promised wider support for the SDP.

A few days later the Minister of Defence received Anna Kéthly who described the grave situation of some 400 social democratic and trade union leaders sent to internment camps or forced labour companies, and asked help for workers' homes occupied by soldiers. Vilmos Nagybaczoni Nagy assured Kéthly of his far-reaching support and understanding. After the meeting, certain steps were taken to free the social democrats from internment camps and forced labour companies and return workers' homes, but since Nagybaczoni Nagy was removed, these measures were not implemented.

The SDP leadership interpreted both meetings as signs of the government's intent to gain the organized workers. Some went so far as to interpret Horthy's hints in the following way: "Owing to the new turn of events, even the establishment of a coalition government would not be ruled out". In this hope, right-wing social democratic leaders persisted in their attitude of wait-and-see. However, in the SDP and in the trade unions, tendencies contrary to this policy got stronger.

In the spring of 1943—as mentioned earlier—the economic struggle of the masses of workers reached a new stage. The leftward shift of the workers' local organizations was accelerated. At the local meetings following trade union assembly meetings new left-wing and communist leaders were elected for the top positions of trade union groups. The voice of the Left got stronger within the social democratic party organizations both in the capital and in the countryside.

Árpád Szakasits and later György Marosán, who became secretary in charge of party organization in the countryside, visited the rural organizations from April 1943 onwards, a fact that greatly contributed to the radicalization of these organs. Gyula Kállai held several "lectures on culture", discussing such issues at several party organizations. The lectures held by Mária Gárdos and other left-wing social democratic functionaries were received with great interest.

The memorandum on the national minority issue drawn up by Árpád Szakasits and the Kolozsvár party organization acted as an explosive. Its many data uncovered the anti-minority policy of the government and the local authorities, and it demanded equal rights for national minorities. Despite the protests coming from the local authorities, the Minister of Home Affairs had to order an investigation for fear that, unless a remedy was found, the facts of the memorandum would reach the Romanian authorities, provoking an international scandal.

Young workers carried out successful activity. After the disbanding of the National Youth Committee, communist youths were working to strengthen young workers' groups in the trade unions. They managed to infiltrate several factories and established relations with the youth groups of the Independent Smallholders

Party, and with the editorial boards of newspapers known for their anti-German stand (*Kis Újság, A Mai Nap, Magyar Nemzet, Újság, Szabad Szó*, etc.). They succeeded in making *Népszava* deal from time to time with the problems of the youth. For months, left-wing newspapers have dealt with their problems, the tasks of their unity, and those of anti-fascist national independence. In July 1943, they decided to convene an anti-fascist youth conference.

Right-wing social democrats saw an increase of Communist Party influence behind the radical trend within the party and in a part of the trade unions. They repeatedly warned the "internal opposition" to be moderate and wanted them to pursue a cautious policy. They used force if necessary. In a letter addressed to the Secretariat, Anna Kéthly pointed out the grave problem of the elimination of the opposition: "[to live with an] Internal opposition—an immense task, but not impossible. . . the bolshies have learned that in 1919", she wrote, "they steadily strive to win the confidence of the members. . ." The task of the Secretariat, according to her, was that no party organization or party meeting "should serve bolshi aims".

Right-wing social democratic leaders rushed to help the government stop the Diósgyőr demonstration and the movement for higher wages launched by the Pécs miners. As Károly Peyer announced to some two thousand Diósgyőr workers, "We do not want to implement our goals by demonstrations or by damaging windows or vehicles". He said he understood the just complaints of the workers, but there was a war going on, and workers could give voice to their just claims only after the war had ended. Workers' organizations had to look into the future, Peyer said: "today the most important thing is . . . what will be after the war. . ."

Thus in the first half of 1943 the government succeeded in holding back the fermentation (a necessary result of the objective situation and the work of communists and left-wing social democrats) that might have become the basis of a comprehensive, anti-fascist demonstration.

The situation was somewhat more favourable in the Peasant League uniting the democratic masses of the villages and in the Independent Smallholders Party.

Because of the more lenient attitude of the Kállay government towards the bourgeois opposition, by the end of 1942 the county organizations of the Peasant League had already been built up. After this, the primary aim was to set up village organizations. The increasing political interest of village workers was reflected by the fact that, by the end of January 1943, local organizations functioned in 293 villages, and were under development at another 97 places.

Under such circumstances the foundation of the Navvies' Section could no longer be postponed. In the course of the year that had elapsed, an increasing number of poor peasants realized how important the Section would be for them. It was partly due to this fact that more progressive leaders were elected in the newly formed local branches who wanted to turn the League into an active force of the struggle for anti-fascist national unity.

The influence of the HPC and the left wing of the peasantry was felt on the organizational work. Although Ferenc Nagy and those around him still had a great

impact on the League, by 1943 a group of national organizing secretaries had emerged, to whom the peasants, especially the poor ones, listened better than to the leaders. Among them we find István Dobi, communist Ferenc Iliás, József Dancs from Komárom (who placed a wreath on the Petőfi statue on March 15, 1942), and also radical Gergely Kiss of Vésztő and democratic big farmer Vince Vörös. Members of the Győrffy College combined their "sociographic studies" with organizational work. In the spring of 1943, local organizations headed by left-wing leaders were formed by leaps and bounds in the Stormy Corner, in Bihar and Heves counties, in the annexed Felvidék area, in Rábaköz, Csallóköz and in the villages of Somogy county.

This change compelled Ferenc Nagy and his followers to found the Navvies' Section at the January 29 Executive Committee Session of the Peasant League. A four-member preparatory committee was elected: István Dobi, Ferenc Iliás, Imre Fekete (agrarian workers), and Béla Kovács (General Secretary of the Peasant League).

In the spring of 1943, members of the preparatory committee toured the whole country. They made personal contacts with the local leaders of the agrarian workers, discussed the problems of the village proletariat and the program of the Section, and prepared the statutory assembly. This was extremely important since the leaders of the Peasant League were still hoping, as a final chance, that the poor peasants would not send delegates to the statutory assembly and thus the establishment of the Navvies' Section would have to be postponed for lack of interest.

The date of the statutory assembly was set for May 9. It was attended by more than a hundred people. Ferenc Nagy offered a class-appeasing program without a single hint at land reform. Those working for the establishment of the Section wanted to create a fighting organization capable of preventing fascist fermentation and to take a firm stand against war unity, against participation in the war, and also wished to provide land for the peasants. These ideas were expressed in the address of István Dobi and also in the program adopted by the 14-strong national committee which met after the assembly. Instead of the draft prepared by Ferenc Nagy, another one was presented to the committee. This had been elaborated by Ferenc Donáth and Ferenc Iliás on behalf of the HPC, and was also discussed and "amended" at the extended editorial board meeting of *Szabad Szó*. Beside the distribution of land and the unity of workers and peasants, the program demanded a decrease of the war burdens of the peasantry, free labour permit, wage increases, the increase of bread rations, improvement of the cloths and footwear supplies, and a fundamental reform of the produce delivery system. *Szabad Szó* became the official paper of the Section.

After the assembly, sections were founded in several villages, and various reading circles, the so-called "48-circles" (named after the events of 1848), reported their intent to join. After the Navvies' Section had been set up, leaders of the Smallholders Party gradually reduced their activity in the Peasant League and turned their full strength to the organization and activation of their own party.

At the May leadership meeting and executive committee session of the Smallholders Party, an amended program adjusted to the changed situation, but adhering to the "old basic principles" was adopted and announced. The Farmers' and Navvies' Sections of the party founded in 1937 were revived, and a resolution was adopted to establish a Bourgeois Section.

However, despite the great expectations of the masses and the left-wing leaders of the party, the program announced no fundamental changes. The executive committee supported the idea of a democratic worker-peasant union, but the declaration had serious blemishes, or rather was full of them. It stood firmly by the old-principle program, the maintenance of large estates and royal institutions, and emphasized that Miklós Horthy was to be backed and "internal order" protected in the difficult times.

In June 1943, the Bourgeois Section was set up. The leaders of the Smallholders Party wanted to attract to it the bourgeois and petty bourgeois masses disappointed by the extreme Right and the Government Party. By appointing Béla Varga, a right-wing representative of the party, Head of the Section, they also defined the political orientation of the organization. However, the Bourgeois Section did not become a means in the hands of the Right but, on the contrary, played an important role in gathering left-wing forces in the party, and its organization aroused great interest.

Writers, journalists and public personalities (participating earlier in the independence movement led by the HPC) announced their intent to join the Section one after the other. Now, in the spring of 1943, although many of them started out from a wrong ideological and practical background, they repeatedly emphasized their support for the idea of a "worker-peasant-bourgeois" unity, and some also supported the idea of anti-fascist national unity. The real leader of the Bourgeois Section was Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, supported—against Béla Varga—by the Secretary of the Section, Imre Oltványi, too. Its members included Gyula Ortutay, staff member of the Hungarian Radio, Ernő Mihályfi, editor-in-chief of *Független Magyarország*, Sándor Barcs, principal contributor to *Újság*, and such significant figures of the literary and scientific life as József Bognár and Gábor Tolnai, Géza Rubletzky, Secretary of the Revisionist League (*Revíziós Liga*), József Kis, editor of *Magyar Tudósító* (Hungarian Reporter). Communists—György Pálffy and László Sólyom, former field-officers, Helén Antal and others—established close relations with the Bourgeois Section within a short period of time and then infiltrated the organization.

The majority of the Bourgeois Section did not agree with the anti-communist and anti-Soviet propaganda pursued by the leaders of the Smallholders Party. They meant to express their opposition to Hitler not only in words, but also in deeds, and demanded the same from the party. Following the Section's foundation, the wing raised its voice "against the conservative old people in the Smallholders Party", too.

IV. 4. Conflicts and Opposed Views in the Camp of the Anti-Hitlerite Forces Formation of the Peace Party

While the right-wing leadership of the SDP, the Peasant League and the Smallholders Party did little to find a way out of the war waged by Hitler's side even after Stalingrad and Voronezh, the communists, together with the left-wing politicians of the SDP and the ISP, were conducting a permanent search for the ways and means of uniting all anti-Hitlerite forces into some organ modelled on the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee.

The very first articles published in *Népszava* in January were already busy discussing the planned "Petőfi year" that was meant to serve as a façade for the gathering of the forces of national resistance. Articles by Gosztonyi, Gyula Kállai and Árpád Szakasits pointed to the definite topicality of the principles and objectives represented and fought for by Petőfi. They called attention to the fact that Petőfi was the first to profess consciously the faith that no struggle can be successful unless the best forces of the nation unite to achieve their common aim.

They planned to call a large-scale memorial evening to commemorate the 120th anniversary of the poet's birth which was also to serve to demonstrate broad national unity. A sponsoring body was also founded, with the participation of such personalities of international renown as Sándor Eckhardt, Ferenc Herczeg, Gyula Kornis, Tivadar Rédey, Aladár Schöppflin, Árpád Szakasits, Gyula Szekfű and Géza Voinovich. However, the Minister of Home Affairs, refused to grant permission to organize the Petőfi evening.

Keresztes-Fischer threw no obstacles in the way of the various social democratic and trade union meetings and the reunions held by the Peasant League in the countryside, but he would not let the Left address the people once more in Petőfi's name. Thanks to SDP and ISP leaders he could rest assured that the meetings would not transgress the limits prescribed by the government, whereas he could by no means be certain that the literary evenings, an initiative of the communists marked by Petőfi's name, would not provoke a series of events similar to those taking place on 15 March, 1942.

Another reason why the 15 March, 1942 demonstration could not possibly be repeated was that the Ministry of Home Affairs had prohibited in good time all proceedings that were contrary to government policy and could lead to a demonstration. Yet another reason was that the HPC's proposal was not accepted by the parties and trade unions concerned, and the HPC itself was in no position to put enough pressure on them to make their leaders re-consider the communist proposal. Moreover, the ranks of the party were decimated again at that time. In December 1942 József Skolnik and in February 1943 István Kovács, both secretaries of the Central Committee, had been hunted down by the investigating authorities. As a result of the new arrests, the organization of the party got muddled again.

At that time, the left-wing Deák-Mayer group of workers and intellectuals, close to the HPC, also suffered a serious blow. The group exerted considerable influence

on the factory workers of Csepel, Pesterzsébet, Kispest, Sashalom, Soroksár and Rákospalota. It established connections in several rural towns as well, for example in Debrecen, Nyíregyháza, Salgótarján, in the Tata coal basin, at Pápa etc. Communists working at the József Nádor Technical University, at the Faculty of Medicine and at several institutes of research, the Pál Teleki Institute among others, were also arrested. Of the 241 persons arrested, 176 were handed over to the Court of the Chief of Staff and the rest to the military tribunal of the 1st Budapest Army Corps; only 19 were released.

As part of the anti-communist campaign, the hearing of the Northern Transylvanian communists arrested in Summer 1941 was given great press publicity. 255 of the 1200 persons in custody were set free; 117 were convicted by the Special Court of the Chief of Staff; several hundreds were interned; and the suit of some 300 was conducted in Spring 1942.

The Communist Party was not dispirited by the failure of its new attempt but kept trying to call the attention of the parties and masses interested in the pooling of forces to the necessity of establishing national union.

In February, *Magyar Nemzet* started another series of articles on problems of the national concentration of forces. *Mai Nap*, *Újság*, *Független Magyarország*, *Független Magyar Újság* and other anti-German bourgeois papers also joined the debate. The articles were practically unanimous in stating that "All who think, must feel and know that we have come to a peripeteia", and are looking, searching to find out "what is to be done." "Restlessness", "uneasiness", "concern over the future" and a certain healthy urge to act, they wrote, is a general phenomenon. If only this healthy urge to act, the valuable power reserves slumbering in the womb of Hungarian society, could be channeled "into a river of definite aim and course", "we would acquire such an abundance of energy"—Rudolf Andorka wrote in his article in *Magyar Nemzet*—"that would prove sufficient to master all the dangers and ordeals casting a shadow on Hungarian soil". Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky expressed a similar idea: "The best minds of the nation should undertake... to embark on the road of a more humane, a more Hungarian life, together with the peasantry and the workers". In *Újság* Sándor Barcs called on "the liberal democratic bourgeoisie" to embrace the cause of national unity, to take the first steps towards the working classes and work hard to open "the gate leading out of the crisis". Meanwhile, letters urging the establishment of national cooperation flooded into the editorial boards of the newspapers. The unfolding debate, however, had a very serious default: it discussed the necessity of cooperation from the points of view of the future, of post-war arrangements, not those of secession, a break with the Germans and anti-fascist independence struggle.

Communists, left-wing social democrats and democrats preoccupied with the fate of the country were happy to observe that the bourgeois papers lent their support once again to the idea of national union.

The Communist Party welcomed the articles and urged new publications, but clearly saw that their aim was to avert attention from anti-fascist resistance, from actual struggle, and to centre the tasks of cooperation on avoiding the expected

post-war crisis. "We acknowledge" that "our stance is a defensive and not an offensive one"; circumstances do not allow for more. *Magyar Nemzet* opposed the slogan *primum vivere* ('to live above all') to the program of the HPC implying more than fight for the mere "biological existence of the nation", and seeing "the pledge of its survival and rebirth not in renouncing struggle but, on the contrary, in the simultaneous fight against Hitler and for democratic transformation". The HPC expected that the struggle against Hitler would not shake the foundations of our future existence but would, on the contrary, help strengthen them.

The editorial of the March 7, 1943 issue of *Népszava* stated that the bases of cooperation were virtually laid down in the 1941 Christmas number of the paper and a cooperation and national unity could not possibly be but "fundamentally democratic in character".

However, even left-wing social democrats had been convinced by that time that recruiting was to serve "the Hungary of tomorrow", and not anti-Hitlerite struggle.

In the anti-Nazi circles of opposition Kállay's policy engendered hope that the government would after all be able to lead the country to peace "at the right moment" and with "the smallest possible amount of risk". From István Bethlen to Károly Peyer, from Aladár Huszár to Zoltán Tildy, all considered Admiral Horthy and Prime Minister Kállay the trustees of future foreign political development. They never or hardly ever thought of the possibilities of development in the field of foreign policy independently of the government.

Virtually all the articles published between March and May 1943 agreed that the main task of national unity was self-defence, i.e. the salvaging of the thousand-year-old Hungarian state, constitution and parliamentarism for the future. Their stance, no doubt, was also anti-extreme right, for in the spring of 1943 Imrédy and his circle launched an attack against the Kállay government and especially the opposition forces. But it was also aimed at consistent left-wing anti-Hitlerite forces and especially the communists. For instance, in the March 29 number of *Független Magyarország*, István Barankovics asked why national unity was necessary, for, he said, "at the end of the war Hungarians will have to stand the test of history a second time. *Those who do not wish to commit new Hungarian crimes, another 1918-1919, must above all strive to prepare the nation for the transitional period between war and peace*" (Italics mine,—I.P.). Gyula Dessewffy made a similar statement: "*The accomplishment of Hungarian existence does not so much depend on how the war ends, but rather on what the Hungarian way of life, the post-war internal set-up, would be like.*"

That is, the articles opened fronts for both the Right and the Left: they urged the establishment of a national unity excluding the communists. Parallel with the leftward shift of the masses and at a time when the HPC was working on the establishment of that very unity, the organization of resistance, and moreover, the greatest possible mobilization of the petit bourgeois and bourgeois forces, those rallied up against the party, whose interests and defence it undertook and served best. The articles did their utmost to avert from the most revolutionary-minded those who thought the possibilities of evolution lay with the left wing of the independence

movement. Leftists were excluded from the union which, on the other hand, opened its gates for the anti-Nazi and conservative circles of the ruling classes. Conservatism, they wrote, must preserve the universal national interests and serve development—by preserving not only the values, but also the causes and energy-resources of the past for the future.

Not doubt, it was a positive feature of the press debate that the majority of the participants criticized those who attempted to exclude the working class from the union. The majority of the Right dreamed of holding hands with the workers' "élite", their Peyerist and moderate "notabilis" section and the renown leaders and politicians of the opposition. Alliance with the revolutionary section, however, was out of question, since it might have endangered democracy, freedom, and the thousand-year-old ideas of constitutionalism and parliamentarism. The possibility of a worker-peasant alliance was also excluded. "Let us embrace each other and put an end to hatred", the authors said to prevent the just criticism of the workers.

Social reforms played an important part both in the debates and the programs of the parties interested in national unity. Even the majority of the government saw clearly that the Horthy regime could not survive the war unchanged—certain social reforms would be inevitable. The government dealt with social issues, too, or at least tried to tune its propaganda machinery accordingly.

The bourgeois layers opposed to Hitler considered it a basic requirement that post-war settling should not shock the economic and political foundations of the regime. Social reforms had to be postponed until the bourgeoisie regained its firm grip over power again, and could assure that neither the size, nor the implementation of the social reforms endanger their interests.

They tried to persuade the workers that the cause of *both the nation and the reforms* would be lost if the "two working classes made an attempt at implementing their social programs in the transitional period". Even Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky who supported the idea of national unity willingly and freely, doubted whether the main social reforms could be carried out in the period "leading from war to peace".

The debate aroused the interest of an increasing number of people. Bourgeois and petit bourgeois layers welcomed the articles discussing the tasks of national unity. However, the consistently democratic elements (also supporting national unity) were greatly concerned over the negative phenomena of the debate. They gave voice to their anxiety in letters, and urged the quick realization of national cooperation. They demanded that the politicians and writers of the bourgeoisie should give up their "insignificant philosophizing" and "join a policy that is definite and constructive in the given circumstances". Care was to be taken, as a correspondent of *Népszava* pointed out, that "none might save the remnants of the old world through the open gates of the solidarity of industrial workers".

While in 1941-42 *Népszava* was the centre of constructive proposals for the solution of practical and theoretical problems of cooperation, in 1943 both the initiative and the direction was taken over by the anti-Hitlerite journalists and politicians working for *Magyar Nemzet*. This was due, among other things, to the change that had occurred in the SDP's policy.

In 1941–1942 communists and left-wing democrats did their utmost to make the issue of national unity the concern of all organized workers; to make them support the movement by their own actions. At that time, however, owing to the policy of right-wing social democrats, organized workers were observers rather than participants in first the press debate, and then the unfolding cooperation between the leaders of the SDP on the one hand, and those of the Smallholders Party on the other. János Kádár recalls that even left-wing social democrats wished to rely on Western-oriented petit bourgeois groups, on the Independent Smallholders Party and the powers gathering around *Magyar Nemzet* to a greater extent than justified by the latter's social prestige and function in the independence movement. It is no accident, therefore, that *Népszava* let the bourgeois circles take the initiative and, influenced by the bourgeois press, defined the primary task of national unity "in the transition period" as the ensuring of law and order.

The HPC followed the unity-debate with keen attention. Although communists had little opportunity to voice their opinion in the papers, they tried to take a stand against harmful views when they had a chance to do so. In his article "Our Workers and the Historic Past", Gyula Kállai sharply criticized views which doubted or denied the role of the working class. In another article he criticized, although indirectly, the fundamental mistake gaining ground in the camp of national unity, emphasizing that the bourgeois–petit bourgeois wings of the adherents of national unity neglected the wishes of the masses; they refused to rely on their movement and gave no definite guidelines for the great struggle of the workers.

In March 1943, the HPC distributed a circular among public personalities known for their anti-Hitlerite stand, among the leaders of the parties and the social organizations, and among journalists; the circular analyzed thoroughly the tasks and aims of national unity and brought to light the mistakes and dangers apparent within the pro-national unity block. It also outlined the essence of the "see-saw policy" of the Kállay government, and pointed to its harmful effects.

The HPC took a firm stand against the government campaign that had virtually paralyzed active anti-Hitlerite struggle. It stressed that sham slogans like "law and order", "internal revolution", and "a new Trianon" were but instruments in the hand of the government that allowed it to serve Hitler undisturbed, and push the country into a catastrophe without having to encounter the least resistance. One of the factors paralyzing left-wing opposition was the standpoint of the government: "We shall never wage war against the Allied Forces, but only against the Soviet Union, our ancient enemy". A policy basing Hungary's future on the opposition between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers could easily cause serious damages by neglecting the fact that "peace and a new European order cannot be imagined without the active participation of the Soviet Union which had undertaken the brunt of Hitler's destruction". Nor could it be disregarded, the circular stressed, that the Allied Forces were far away, whereas the Soviet Union was a neighbour. "It is of vital importance that our country should establish good relations with the Soviet Union which has a decisive say in Eastern European issues". The circular took a firm stand against the propaganda scaring the masses

and especially the bourgeoisie with the "bolshevik bogey" to turn them against the Soviet Union and the Hungarian Party of Communists.

It also fought against those who tried to sidetrack the policy of national unity with a false *nationalist* propaganda, and by using the *nationalist contamination* of the masses; and against any attempt to link the above with an attack against Romania to regain Southern Transylvania by arms.

The HPC also pointed to the fact that the forces opposed to Hitler must by no means be influenced by Kállay's "see-saw policy", nor must they give up struggle against the Nazi hirelings and government policy endangering the very existence of the nation. Defeat and destruction could not be avoided unless the national forces were united, and unless *all* forces opposed to Hitler decided to act at once.

The HPC Central Committee published its program in April 1943 amidst debates over the issue of national unity. It criticized more sharply than ever the views hindering anti-Hitlerite struggle.

Prior to this, at end-1942, Hungarian communists living in the Soviet Union worked out the detailed program of the independence front which they regularly broadcast on Radio Kossuth. The program was agreed upon and accepted by the anti-fascist democratic camp led by Mihály Károlyi and working in Britain and in the United States. It contained primarily the tasks of anti-Hitler struggle, the breakaway from the Axis Powers and fight for a separate peace treaty and to regain the independence of the country. It also included demands concerning the democratic transformation of the country. The program demanded a national government, democratic freedom rights, a large-scale land reform, i.e. the distribution of all estates above 300 acres, an independent Hungarian industrial policy, and democratic national minority and cultural policies.

It played an important part in the anti-fascist education and mobilization of Hungarian soldiers who had fallen prisoners of war in the Soviet Union. In the autumn of 1943 the nine-point *Free Hungary* program was worked out in the 27/b camp of the Hungarian prisoners of war at Krasnogorsk and was, in turn, adopted by anti-fascists in the other camps as well.

An important document of the Central Committee published in April again urged the pooling of national forces, stating that "the independent, free and democratic Hungary recruits every industrial and intellectual worker, every peasant and progressive bourgeois. Our party supports all the parties working for the establishment of a national front and supporting the idea of the independence of the country." However, a wide-scale union "*must face the tasks of today, of this very day. Peace is to be pursued already when we are at war.*" The progressive and democratic parties were to set up a joint body to lead the struggle from the platform of a joint program which, according to the party, had to contain the following five objectives: immediate, separate peace treaty; the retrieving of the independence of the country; new elections to make it possible for the people to decide the fate of their country; democratic freedom rights; full emancipation of national minorities; land reforms.

The HPC program was essentially identical with the one broadcast on Radio Kossuth, with the sole difference that, since the leaders of the party knew the internal situation better, the tasks were formulated more precisely and, therefore, the program had a greater *mobilizing force*. Part of the demands linked anti-Hitlerite struggle and the mobilization of workers against war burdens, wishing to transform thereby their economic struggle into a political one.

The Communist Party summed up its demands in 12 points, including the following issues.

An immediate and separate peace treaty and a *national government* capable of getting rid of the traitors one that would rely on the people, secure a peace treaty and establish the independence of the country. *Democratic freedom rights* and the immediate liberation of political prisoners and emigrants. *Equality before the law*, regardless of sex, race, descent, religion; moreover, the immediate abolishment of all discriminations against non-Hungarians and all the prerogatives of the Germans (a separate point in the program).

As for the *land reforms*, the program demanded that all estates larger than 300 acres should be expropriated and distributed. It also demanded a *factory constitution*, complete *freedom of labour*, and the recognition of *factory councils*; moreover, *higher wages* and *better supplies*, *no more requisition*, *a just sharing of the burdens* and *compensation for the soldiers' families*.

By March 1943, the SDP had also prepared the draft of its program which was then subjected to debates. It was discussed for months in the party press, in party organizations and boards of intellectuals set up for this very purpose. According to the 27-page draft, the main task of the working class was to prepare for the transition period "with more intelligence and a greater sense of responsibility" than in 1918–1919. It simply ignored the world war going on, and the fact that Hungary was the member of a fascist coalition whose elimination was to determine the future of the country and as such should have figured among the tasks of the SDP, or else the positive ideas expressed in the draft could not possibly come true. The political demands of the draft all referred to a bourgeois democracy, without even hinting at political tasks pointing beyond it. It did demand the nationalization of the key branches of industry, the elimination of monopolies, state control over big capital and the introduction of planned economy, without, however, indicating the class(es) on which state power was to rely in the course of the implementation of the above. It demanded the distribution of all lands larger than 200 acres accompanied by compensation and an effective protection of small and dwarf holders. The future of the peoples in the Danube Basin was to be ensured by a federation of the states concerned.

The draft program—whose main architect was Illés Mónus—engendered sharp debates in the leadership of the SDP. The policy prevailing in the party was reflected in the addresses, too, none of which criticized the draft for neglecting the most important issue, i.e. the problem of turning against Hitler's Germany.

The Independent Smallholders Party announced its program in May 1943. The program stressed the great importance of the thousand-year-old Hungarian

constitutionalism and the maintenance of the traditional parliamentary system. It emphasized that the threat of the Big Powers to call to account all concerned was nothing but an action launched against the "sovereignty of the small nations", against the survival of the "small nations". The program demanded social levelling, a "definite settling of the land issue", without indicating, however, the upper limit of the lands to be distributed.

The announcement of the ISP program made certain layers of the peasantry feel that the party was no longer "protecting the interests of the peasants". From that time on, ISP leaders had to emphasize ever more frequently that they still considered the solution of the land issue an important task. This program did not mobilize either, nor was it meant to do so; its aim, as Tildy put it, was to "hold together" and "protect from falling apart" the "party crowd".

Both the programs and the debates following them clearly indicated that the construction of "the Hungary of the future" was impossible without the elimination of the large estates. Drastic land reform was the basic issue of democratic transformation. Those parties which intended to embrace a democratic program and its implementation could by no means overlook the land issue.

The endeavour to exclude the communists from all plans of national revival was an important feature of both the above-mentioned programs and the policies of the parties and groups opposed to Hitler. The reason why this policy could gain ground in the camp of those urging national cooperation was that the foundation of this cooperation was lacking: top-level HPC–SDP cooperation was non-existent at the time. Negotiations between the two parties had been broken off in 1942. After the 1942 arrests, right-wing social democrats did their utmost to decrease the impact of the HPC over the SDP and the trade unions, and make communist activity in workers' organizations as difficult as possible. They appealed to the anti-unity and anti-communist activity of Western social democratic parties to make Hungarian organized workers accept their *own* anti-unity and anti-communist stance. For example, *Népszava* quoted the decision of the Whitsun Congress of the British Labour Party to refuse cooperation with the Communist Party as a guiding principle to be taken into consideration by all European workers' parties. This propaganda line of right-wing democrats was supported by bourgeois journalists centred around *Magyar Nemzet* who also took each and every opportunity to prove that the Western parties still opposed cooperation with the communists in any form. This type of propaganda strengthened considerably after the dissolution of the Comintern in May 1943.

Right-wing SDP leaders would not negotiate with the communists or support a national union including them. "A popular front with the bourgeois democratic parties in order to achieve a certain aim—that is something feasible, but a popular front of cooperation involving the extreme Left—that is impossible to realize; perhaps it can be done against or without me, but definitely not with me"—Illés Mónus wrote in a letter.

Left-wing social democrats did not plainly refuse to cooperate with the communists, but they would carry out no joint action with the HPC as a party. They

were most scared of the permanent terror and persecution of the HPC, whereas for right-wing social democrats opposition to any form of cooperation with the communists was a matter of conviction, of principle. Left-wing social democrats urging the establishment of national cooperation were fully aware of the fact that no significant results could be obtained without the communists and also that they could not possibly act successfully against the repeated attacks of the Right unless they rallied their ranks and were supported by the communists. Therefore, in May 1943, left-wing SDP leaders decided to seek connections with the Central Committee of the Hungarian Party of Communists—for the first time since Spring 1942. The illegal inter-party meeting was attended by János Kádár on behalf of the HPC, and by Árpád Szakasits representing the left wing of the SDP.

János Kádár writes the following about the meeting: "At the negotiations, Árpád Szakasits suggested that the HPC give up, for the time being at least, all illegal actions (such as the distribution of pamphlets, etc.), and fight fascism, the fascist war together with left-wing social democrats in all legal workers' organization (the press, etc.), and with all the legal means of mass struggle, to protect the legal organizations of the workers and to establish connections with the other democratic forces". The HPC, on the other hand, suggested to adopt a more definite anti-German policy and joint actions. Szakasits refused the proposal. "At the talks, I pointed out that, in the given circumstances, renouncing the means of illegal struggle equalled renouncing struggle in general"—János Kádár wrote. The negotiations yielded no results, and no top-level talks followed them until the spring of 1944.

At the beginning of June 1943, the HPC Central Committee discussed the situation at several sessions. After thorough debate, an unanimous decision was reached—greatly influenced by the dissolution of the Comintern in May 1943. The leaders of the HPC learned about the Comintern decision indirectly, from hostile sources interpreting it as a significant concession aimed at strengthening anti-fascist world coalition. Therefore, HPC leaders assumed that the name "communist" was no longer compulsory. The resolution dissolving the Comintern was interpreted as an opportunity to change the name of the party.

In its resolution concerning the name-change of the party, the Central Committee provisionally suspended all illegal connections and promised to decide on a new name and on all further activities after a few weeks' break of conspiratory activity.

The enlarged session of the Central Committee met in July 1943 with the participation of János Kádár, Ferenc Donáth, László Orbán, Gábor Péter, István Szirmai and Pál Tonhauser. Several proposals were made in the course of the discussion. The Central Committee decided to call the party *Peace Party* (*Békepart*), to express the longing for peace of the masses and their wish to secure a separate peace treaty, but also because it seemed a good cover name.

In changing the name of the party, its leaders had two objectives in mind. First, they expected that the "disbanding" of the party would ease the ruthless terror against it, and thus they would be able to go on organizing their party under more

favourable conditions and with better results. Secondly, they also hoped that as "Peace Party" they would be able to establish official relations with the other anti-fascist parties and groups, putting an end thereby to the isolation of the party, and to fight for the establishment of an anti-fascist patriotic front led by the workers with more success. The main objective of the party, however, did not change in the least: they wanted to overthrow fascism, and create an independent, free and democratic Hungary.

In the summer of 1943, communists scored success in some fields of party work. Propaganda activity got stronger; the pamphlets of the Peace Party, some ten thousand copies, reached even the remotest parts of the country. Work among the peasants was successful.

However, changing the party's name was not so fortunate a move, after all. There was no result achieved just where the Central Committee hoped there would be: fascist terror organizations did not doubt for a moment that the Peace Party was identical with the Hungarian Party of Communists. Already the July report of the Central Investigating Headquarters of the gendarmerie revealed that the Peace Party was the party of the communists. Prime Minister Kállay and Propaganda Minister István Antal talked about it as the Communist Party. Terror and persecution did not stop but, on the contrary, increased.

No significant step was made concerning the establishment of an anti-fascist national unity front. The Central Committee falsely assumed that anti-communist terror was the cause of the hesitation of the forces interested in the idea of national unity. It did play an important role, but only for the Left. *The right wing of the independence movement, on the other hand, turned against the Hungarian Party of Communists not for fear of the terror but because they rejected radical democratic transformation.* The majority was not at all willing to launch active anti-fascist struggle and mobilize the masses, whereas the Peace Party, the same as the HPC before it, stressed the great importance of this factor. Large-scale mass actions alone could have made the right wing of the independence movement participate in a union together with the communists and engaged in anti-Hitlerite struggle. A mere change of name could not possibly solve so great a problem.

To sum up the above: in the first half of 1943, the combined effect of *the unfolding save-the -regime policy of the Kállay government*, the attitude of the right wing of the independence movement rejecting fight against Hitler and the weakness of the left wing made it impossible for the accelerating leftward shift of the masses inducing economic and political struggles to overcome isolation and develop into general anti-fascist and anti-government actions. *Resistance from "below" and from "above" could not be united and failed to become a force shaping the fate of the country, despite the fact that the objective circumstances would have required also permitted it.*

V. Failure to Rally Anti-Hitlerite Forces The Flop of the See-Saw Policy

V. 1. Impact of the Italian Events Party Alliance of Social Democrats and Smallholders

The large-scale attack in the summer of 1943 of the German armed forces in the Oryol-Kursk-Belgorod area was answered by a Soviet counter-attack in mid-July, and the Soviet offensive gradually spread to the whole front. There were places where the Soviet Army advanced as much as 400–450 km; they crossed the Dnepr and liberated Kyev on November 6.

The pro-German wing of the Hungarian ruling classes expected that the Summer offensive of the Germans would reverse the situation. They hoped that, after the hard Russian winter, the German armed forces would regain their superiority. Their hopes, however, vanished in a few days.

On July 10, 1943, the landing of British and American troops in Sicily sealed the fate of Italian fascism. It was followed by mass demonstrations and strikes and Mussolini was ousted on July 25, and Badoglio became Prime Minister. By July 26, Wehrmacht units had occupied a part of the country.

Events in Italy influenced the Hungarian government in two ways: Kállay and those close to him regretted the loss of one of their best partners in the fascist coalition; on the other hand, pro-Western circles were hoping that the landing would allow them to implement their own political concepts.

At the Cabinet session after Mussolini's defeat, Kállay expressed his loyalty both to Italy, which was about to break with Germany, and to fascist Germany occupying Italy, but that was all he would do. He later outlined the foreign policy of his government in a Radio address and the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jenő Ghyczy, did the same in the *Bulletin of the Party of Hungarian Life*. They both tried to draw a line between Hungarian war aims and Hitler's war endeavours. Kállay said the following: "It was not we who set them [the war torches] on fire; nor can we put them out." Ghyczy's article followed the same line of thought: "In the war, big nations clashed, whose stakes and risks differ from those of the small ones. Small nations—Hungary among them—fight for their existence, for the sovereignty of their states and for their social welfare. . . . Hungarian policy follows the course of self-defence, not that of conquest. . . ." That is, both politicians wished to make Hungary seem a "non-belligerent" country prepared for self-defence.

Diplomatic activity to prepare the breakaway was renewed. New "diplomats" appeared in Ankara, Bern, Lisbon and Stockholm, seeking connections with

British and American negotiators. After the landing in Sicily, the British government put some pressure on the Kállay government and certain details of the exploratory talks of government representatives were announced. The *Times*, the semi-official daily of the British Foreign Department, announced on July 16th that Kállay had turned to the British government requesting a separate peace treaty. On July 17th, the BBC also announced the news.

The Kállay government got into a difficult situation. It tried to deny the news about its exploratory talks. At the same time, in mid-August, Kállay's envoy, Chief Consul Dezső Ujváry sent the Hungarian offer to capitulate to the British ambassador in Ankara. The essence of the offer was that the Hungarian government would surrender to the British and American troops when they reached the Hungarian frontier.

At the beginning of the talks, government circles and pro-Western elements tried to shed light on the difficult situation in the press of neutral countries like Turkey, Sweden, Switzerland and the Vatican. *Osservatore Romano*, the paper of the Vatican, as well as the Swiss *Petit Journal* dealt with the policy of the Hungarian government fighting for "peace" and "reluctant to interfere with the life of other peoples". In an article entitled "Hungarian Words" the Polish emigré paper, *Panstwo Polskie* wrote the following: "Hungary's political situation is indubitably a serious one. . . . Direct German neighbourhood is a great burden on Hungary. No doubt, Hungary would like to break away from the war, if only she could do so. But she has to take into account the consequences of such a step. Moreover, Russian intents not only raise no confidence in Budapest, but do not even give ground to the least doubt. The assumption can be risked that when the giant troops of the Allied Forces will appear on the Hungarian border—the article went on—the Hungarians will not shoot at the British and the Americans whom they admire. . . . nor at the Polish whom they consider their truest friends."

At end-September, an eight-strong delegation of Swedish journalists arrived to Hungary. They conducted lengthy talks with Kállay, the prominent representative of pro-Western policy, and with leaders of the Smallholders Party and the Social Democratic Party. Afterwards, they, too, discussed the grave situation of the Hungarian government in their articles, and called on the Western powers to show more understanding and give more aid. They emphasized that the decisions of the Hungarian government were influenced, besides the danger of German occupation, by the closeness of the Russians as well. "During our talks, Prime Minister Kállay emphasized—they wrote—that what Hungary fears most is the Russian danger." "We may go a long way to the left, but Hungary will never allow herself to be bolshevized."

Kállay and his group kept building their policy on the contradictions between the Soviet Union and the West. That is why the Hungarian government failed to respond to the Soviet approach, of which it had been informed through its Stockholm Embassy already in August. Kállay would negotiate with the West only.

On September 9, Kállay and his followers managed to conclude a preliminary truce agreement with the British government which was to come into force if the

Western powers reached the Hungarian border, and stated that Hungary would gradually decrease military and economic cooperation with Germany and withdraw her troops from the Eastern Front. Moreover, the country promised to resist all attempt on behalf of Germany to occupy Hungary and to reorganize the general staff, so that the army might break with, and turn against, Germany. Agreements were made concerning the flow of information, the free air flight of British and American planes over Hungary, etc.

These events gave a fresh stamina to domestic policy. Reports from the police and from the Lord Lieutenant state that sympathy towards the Germans was on the decrease, whereas the number of those who considered that the war was lost and urged a break with Germany increased. In a letter to the Prime Minister the workers of Csepel demanded to stop the useless bloodshed, hopeless struggle and the promotion of foreign interests. "Once you had unscrupulously involved this unfortunate people in an absolutely futile war forced upon us by Hitler alone, the minimum would be to act at this last opportunity... we want peace..." Other letters to Kállay also reflect that the people had had enough of the war.

The left-wing press welcomed the Italian events indicating the dawn of freedom. *Népszava* welcomed the Italian people on behalf of the Hungarian organized workers and assured them of their solidarity. *Szabad Szó* also sent fraternal greetings to the Italian peasants and workers.

The activity of Count István Bethlen, Count Móric Esterházy, Count Gyula Károlyi, Lipót Baranyai, Baron Albert Radvánszky and those supporting their group and Kállay, but demanding a more definite anti-German stand and a greater willingness to negotiate with the West, became more vivid. In July, Lipót Baranyai and Baron Radvánszky conducted talks with the representatives of the West, Allen Dulles among others, in Switzerland about Hungary's ending the war and the possibilities of saving the Horthy regime. After returning home, they urged the government to invalidate the Trilateral Agreement, call back the Hungarian army from the Eastern Front, to ensure internal order, and not to undertake new war burdens for the Germans. Pro-Western groups of representatives also held a series of talks.

The greatest event in domestic policy was indubitably the joint stand, and later the alliance, of the Independent Smallholders Party and the Social Democratic Party. As it has been explained above, under the influence of the external and internal events taking place at the beginning of 1943, the two parties established closer relations. The setting up of the bourgeois department of the Smallholders Party, and the consequent strengthening of left-wing forces and Bajcsy-Zsilinszky's faction (pursuing more definite action) and the Tildy wing close to it contributed to a considerable extent to their decision to act together with the social democrats.

The initiative was taken by the Smallholders Party. The day after the landing in Sicily, they suggested it to the SDP to inform the government in a joint memorandum of their foreign political ideas and proposals. The SDP accepted the proposal. The joint letter demanded that Kállay "should declare, and inform the governments of the states concerned through the diplomatic channels, that

Hungary is no longer at war. This stance is not directed against anyone; it only means that the conclusions of the actual situation have been drawn... We want peace with all, and wish to save our moral, intellectual and economic values for a better age..."

After Mussolini's defeat, the Smallholders Party sent a memorandum (prepared by Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky) to Kállay. The party leadership decided that the memorandum signed by MPs—protected by parliamentary immunity—was to be handed over to the Prime Minister personally by Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and Tildy. This they did on July 31, 1943.

The first part of the memorandum is something of a summary of the former Bajcsy memoranda protesting against joining the Trilateral Agreement and the proclamations of war. It cites Hungarian history and international law to prove that "*we must get out of this war, for our participation in it is in irreconcilable contradiction... with the vital interests of our nation*". He stated that the Italian events provided a basis not only for the breakaway, but also for "*retuning our former, mistaken foreign policy*".

The memorandum discussed the internal conditions of changing sides, and demanded that those who proclaimed the "German-Hungarian community of fate" be removed from the government, the General Staff and the Staff of Officers and, moreover, from all the leading posts of public life. It urged a reorganization of the General Staff, the gradual liquidation of the Jewish laws and the normalization of the relations with the national minorities.

The memorandum contained many just proposals which could have decreased significantly the risks of a breakaway from Germany, the probability of deploying the Fifth Column and could have improved the internal conditions of changing sides. The first of the proposals was to allow the free movement of democratic parties and a press policy aimed at shaking public opinion "miseducated" and "misled" for such a long time.

Bajcsy-Zsilinszky clearly saw that the Germans would not sit back and watch idly Hungary's withdrawal from the war. Military intervention was to be expected. Still, a government, whose "*aim was to lead Hungary out of the Flood*" had to shoulder the unavoidable risks. Maybe, "it would have to face a power force; not only an eventual attempt at German occupation, but even a German military march across the country". Military confrontation with the Allied Forces, however, had to be avoided at all costs. The memorandum demanded to withdraw Hungarian troops from the Eastern Front to the last soldier, to declare that "our hostile attitude" towards the Soviet Union "had come to an end".

All the shortcomings of the forces opposed to Hitler and represented by Bajcsy-Zsilinszky are evident in the memorandum. The just objectives of the group are interwoven with reactionary and nationalistic endeavours, such as the restoration of St. Stephen's empire; military occupation of Southern Transylvania; the claim that Hungarians are to play a leading role after the reorganization both in the Danube Valley and in Central Europe, etc. Those who submitted to the memorandum seemed to be willing to function as gendarmes in case chaos, i.e.

revolutionary movements, was to develop in Central Europe at the end of the war. The gravest mistake of the memorandum, however, was that it did not address the people; it did not intend to inform of the real situation the most concerned; it did not want to mobilize the workers and rely on them, but expected a solution from Horthy and Kállay who had already proved their willingness to take any risks against the Germans. Still, the authors of the memorandum were the only members of their class to raise their voice against a policy leading to the destruction of the country.

Before its presentation, the memorandum had been discussed by the leadership of the Smallholders Party. Bajcsy-Zsilinszky held discussions with several members of the bourgeois section, with social democratic politicians and communist Gyula Kállai. Although the leadership of the Smallholders Party adopted the memorandum, it turned out later on that they did not really identify themselves with its most important demands.

Communists gave their support to the definite anti-war and anti-German stand reflected in the memorandum, but criticized its anti-Soviet line based on speculations concerning the contradictions within the anti-fascist coalition and reliance on the great Western powers. They agreed that the memorandum was to be sent to the government, but refuted the standpoint that break with the Germans could only be achieved through the government. The greatest mistake of the authors of the memorandum was not, therefore, that they tried to persuade the Horthyist leading circles to withdraw from the war, but that they expected the decisive step from them *alone*, whereas in reality only the active initiative of the masses could have forced them to modify their dangerous policy.

The national executive session of the Social Democratic Party met on July 31. It was convened to discuss the Italian events and the political guidelines of the party. Károly Peyer welcomed the Italian people and the Italian working class which had played a major role in toppling fascism. He announced that the SDP, in accordance with the will of the masses, would like to cooperate with the Independent Smallholders Party in the future. The speakers warmly welcomed the statement of the party leadership and urged definite and brave action.

On August 5, the ISP discussed the proposal in detail, and took a stand for cooperation. The communiqué issued after the session stated the following: "... fully adhering to their respective programs, the Independent Smallholders Party and the Social Democratic Party will, in the future, always launch joint internal political actions". On August 19, the executive committee of the Smallholders Party consented to the alliance.

What were the circumstances that led to the establishment of the alliance? The Italian turn of events above all played a decisive role, and hope strengthened that the landing of the Western powers on the Balkan and their appearance at the Hungarian border was a matter of a short time. The definite demand of the masses that their parties should pool their forces against the government's war policy and take concrete steps to unite the anti-fascist forces in order to break with Hitler and ensure a separate peace treaty also contributed to the move. At the same time, the

leaders of the parties assumed that a declaration of cooperation would increase their political prestige both in domestic and foreign affairs. Kállay put no obstacles in the way of the alliance either, for he thought it would prove the existence of parliamentarism and the anti-German intents of the government to the West, and could be used in internal policy to counterbalance the attacks of the extreme right wing.

The alliance had an unexpectedly great political and press response. *Magyar Nemzet*, *Mai Nap*, *Független Magyarország*, *Kis Újság*, *Független Magyar Újság* and, of course, *Szabad Szó* and *Népszava* among others emphasized the importance of the union and welcomed the alliance. They urged its further broadening. They called on Rassay's Liberty Party to join the alliance, as well as on the Christian Party and smaller bourgeois parties which became more active after the Italian events. The extreme right wing, especially the Arrow Cross, launched a raging attack against the alliance. On August 7, *Virradat* (Dawn) wrote the following: "Public opinion was greatly surprised to learn about this strange and venturesome political alliance. Zoltán Tildy's party is the first to have shaken hands with the intellectual leaders of *Népszava* since 1918".

A few days later, on August 5, the re-emerging Independent Hungarian Bourgeois Party (*Független Magyar Polgári Párt*) announced to join the alliance. Discussions were going on with the legitimists. The Transylvanian Party (*Erdélyi Párt*) ensured the alliance and several politicians and public personalities, including Gyula Szekfű, of its support indirectly. The Liberty Party disassociated itself from the cooperation, and the Christian Party remained passive even after several calls.

The Peace Party welcomed the alliance, the first significant step towards the realization of national unity, a long-pursued objective of the communists. It issued a special leaflet on the occasion: "The Social Democratic Party, the Independent Smallholders Party, the legitimists and other democratic Hungarian forces have taken the first joint step; *they demand an immediate and separate peace treaty*. We welcome the open initiative and call on everyone who wants peace to support the struggle of the democratic forces and join the unity we have described. With a brave stand for peace and liberty, the Hungarian nation chooses the right road. . . This is the road leading to the full emancipation and voluntary fraternal union of the peoples of Hungary." However, the leaflet also pointed to the fact that the union can only be successful "if it uses the strength of the masses to give weight and prestige to the basic interests of the nation". Communists working at the bourgeois sections of the ISP and at the SDP did everything in their power to make the alliance more than a formal union, so that it might become the prime mover of anti-fascist struggle.

Communist György Pálffy working at the bourgeois department of the Smallholders Party was right to point out the most important tasks of union embodied in the party alliance: "... the already existing unity has to be deepened and broadened to involve as many people as possible; at the same time, these forces should be mobilized to achieve concrete aims. As long as unity is restricted to laying down the foundations and declaring the common goals, we do not get any closer to

the declared objectives, and the active participation of the three working layers also remains a desire only. . . . Unity must, of course, show, in the physical sense of the word, too." He suggested a series of demonstrations similar to those in 1941-1942, for these give "new force", "radiate hope", and "*our strength is multiplied by seeing and hearing one another*". (Italics mine—I.P.) The bourgeois department of the Smallholders Party acted in this spirit until the leaders of the party warned them. After the Italian events the leaders and young intellectuals of the department marched, on Pálffy's proposal, to the Museum Garden on two occasions (on July 29 and on July 30) and laid wreaths on the monument of the great Italian freedom fighter, Garibaldi.

Although Hungarian communists working in the Soviet Union also considered the alliance of the two parties a significant step forward in uniting anti-fascist national forces, they also saw its weak points. Radio Kossuth pointed out that the alliance was to be broadened in both directions: towards the Right, the Christian Party opposing war and demanding peace, and towards the Left, towards the communists. They stressed that the active, radical elements of the two parties must strive for the forces in the party alliance to take a definite stand against the government which supported war, to break with Hitler and secure peace. Mass movements were to be relied on, being a source of new impetus, without them, the union would lose prestige.

Talks with Prime Minister Kállay and then the activities of the leaders of the two parties proved how just the anxieties and criticism of the communists were.

After the ISP memorandum was presented and the alliance set up, a discussion began between Kállay and the leaders of the two parties, i.e. Tildy, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, Károly Peyer, Anna Kéthly and Károly Rassay (leader of the Liberty Party). Later, prominent representatives of the big capital and the large estates, Lipót Baranyai and Móric Esterházy, also joined in the discussions based on the memorandum. Kállay admitted that its most significant statements were close to reality, but stressed already at the beginning that he would not turn openly and definitely against fascist Germany and would not declare to withdraw from the war. For, he argued, an open stand would lead to occupation followed by a partisan movement, bombing raids by the Western powers, and confusion and chaos providing good opportunities for "a Russian military occupation". Bajcsy-Zsilinszky tried to refute this argument. "He said, Kállay wrote, that the risk had to be taken anyway, even if all my prophecies were to come true (hinting at Kállay's argument, see above), for there is no other way out. He reminded me that I had always said that we had to follow our own route. According to Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, our route is this risky one. The only difference was, Kállay stressed, that he was ready to undertake the risks for the sake of his objectives, whereas I wanted to achieve mines *without* any risks. Although he did not believe that I could manage to do so, he said in that case he would be the first to take my side".

Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was left alone with his views. Rassay supported Kállay's "cautious" policy and opposed "playing with open cards". Peyer refused Bajcsy-Zsilinszky's demands, emphasizing that "our fate is not in our own hands: what we

do is absolutely irrelevant. The only thing that matters is to delay German occupation as long as possible, and to let us ensure in the meantime (a point he insisted upon) that the Germans do not interfere with our internal affairs." He then explained in detail the necessity of strengthening the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions, "the only force that can resist both the Germans and bolshevik pressure".

The fact that right-wing social democratic leaders would undertake no risk and supported Kállay's cautious policy was shown by their remarks at workers' meetings at the time, and also by their statements to Swedish journalists: "We were forced into this war by an unavoidable step of the then prime minister, taken under pressure; the consequences of which we bear now. At the moment, we do not consider it wise to take another step which would certainly result in senseless sacrifices. We do admit the necessity of struggle and sacrifices, but reserve the right to struggle and sacrifice our lives at the right moment, not unless it becomes absolutely necessary and right."

Nor would Kállay negotiate about the plans of a coalition government, although social democratic circles hoped for such a turn. He was willing, however, to ensure greater organizational freedom for parties of the opposition, but asked them to support the government in both domestic and foreign political affairs. He made it possible for the leaders of the parties to seek channels to organs, and through them to the Western governments in exile, and primarily the British Labour Party. Kállay asked Peyer to prepare a memorandum for the British Labour Party on which they agreed with Horthy during their negotiations.

The SDP leadership drew up the memorandum. The first part criticized the government for its former attacks against the party and the trade unions, and outlined the activity of the extreme right-wing groups against which the government failed to take definite steps. The second part discussed the grave situation of the government and the country and demanded greater understanding and firmer support from the West. It also dealt with the possibility of a German occupation and "the Russian danger threatening from the East". It emphasized that in his endeavour to end the war, Kállay had come to rely more definitely on the Left and tried to hinder the unscrupulous proliferation of fascist methods (persecution of the Jews). The ending part spoke of the Smallholders Party and the Social Democratic Party as trustees of the future, and asked the British Labour Party to help the country, and especially the SDP, seek out the possibilities of development. The memorandum finally expressed hope that the country would be liberated by British and American troops. Kállay sent the memorandum to Stockholm via envoy Ullein-Reviczky, whence it had been taken to London by Vilmos Böhm living there in exile. From then on correspondence between Vilmos Böhm and the Hungarian social democratic leaders became more lively. Böhm was also willing to conduct inquiry talks with the British and American government circles as a representative of the Kállay government. Contact was established with the Swiss Social Democratic Party as well.

The Western relations of the Smallholders Party also improved. Kállay did not object to their memorandum compiled by Bajcsy-Zsilinszky being sent to Switzerland. Correspondence with Tibor Eckhardt living in the United States at the time became more frequent. In Switzerland, the Hungarian Embassy staff, sympathizing with the Smallholders Party, established relations with the Swiss government and the French resistance movement led by de Gaulle.

These relations contributed to the orientation of the opposition parties. They learned that the Western powers, and especially public opinion, were dissatisfied with the steps taken by the Hungarian government and the opposition parties. At the same time, the unilateral nature of these relations strengthened the conviction of the leaders of the concerned parties that they could only get out of the war by relying on the British and the Americans, and that the primary interest of the West lay in that Hungary should under no circumstances become part of the "Russian sphere of interest".

By the second half of August, it had gradually dawned on Bajcsy-Zsilinszky that Kállay did nothing to implement the tasks prescribed in the memorandum. He therefore sent copies to Keresztes-Fischer, Minister of Home Affairs, to István Bethlen, to Horthy and even to Chief of Staff Ferenc Szombathelyi, to put pressure on the government through them. He asked the Governor to grant an interview to him and the leaders of the left-wing parties to discuss what was to be done. Horthy, however, conceded to receive Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky only.

Bajcsy-Zsilinszky demanded definite action. He emphasized that at that moment the government was to fear the extreme Right, not the Left, and the danger would only increase if the government continued to watch idly the activity of the extreme right wing and that of the General Staff, and refused the proposals of left-wing parties. According to Bajcsy-Zsilinszky's notes, Horthy listened to his exposition kindly, but considered his proposals unworkable, because, as he said, despite their undeniable benevolence and patriotic passion, they did little to measure up the complex situation. According to Horthy, a single hasty step could lead to German occupation; "German consent" was a necessary prerequisite of backing out of the war. The Governor stated that the main task of the opposition was to ensure order in the country; he also demanded more patience and understanding and less turbulence.

Any attempt at a breakaway demanded the gradual preparation, and first of all the reorganization, of the army, but both Kállay and Horthy were unwilling to free it from the pro-German staff-officers and officers, a fact that rendered all such plans illusory. The majority of the Hungarian body of generals and officers stood fast by fascist Germany and sharply opposed all endeavours aimed at loosening the political, economic and military ties of the two countries. Kállay's attempts could not have been made realistic without a reshuffling of the General Staff, and the purging of the staff of officers. However, this important issue was not even mentioned at the September session of the Supreme Military Council.

Events in early September gave a new impetus to the forces opposed to Hitler, since the September 4th session of the Supreme Military Council turned down the

secession proposal, and the Privy Council brought a similar decision. The news that Badoglio had signed an unconditional surrender of arms came on the 9th of September; then news came that a British landing on the Balkans was imminent.

On September 10, the Independent Smallholders Party issued a declaration summing up the most important political aims of the party. The declaration accepted by the national executive committee took a stand for "an independent and free Hungary", and also a "constitutional kingdom" based on parliamentarism and the principle of popular representation. It took a firm stand by all policies serving democratic freedom rights, the independence of the country and free cultural and economic development. The declaration stated that it was a chief requirement of the "transition to peace" that "internal order be maintained at all costs. The party and its members oppose definitely all the enemies of order and, in general, all the manifestations of revolutionary spirit."

On September 11, the leaders of the SDP met the Independent Smallholders Party. The session adopted a joint communiqué which they sent to Kállay on September 12. The communiqué emphasized among other things that "We, the undersigned, representatives of the opposition parties, wish to express our firm conviction... that the respected Government is to act urgently in order to save Hungary... We feel that the last moment has come: if we wish to prevent fatal consequences, we must regain and declare our neutrality and put an end to war so that Hungary might take the smaller risk."

At the same time the Independent Smallholders Party held committee sessions at Nagyvárad, Kolozsvár and Miskolc, with Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky as leading speaker. He was the first to emphasize in public that the war, waged by the country contrarily to the interests of the great majority of the nation and entered against the constitution, should be ended. He demanded that the leaders of the country draw the necessary conclusions from the Italian events in both foreign and domestic political respect. He stressed that Hungarian soldiers had to be brought back home from the Eastern Front; that war against the Soviet Union had to be ended and no hostile or even unfriendly policy was to be pursued against the Soviet Union in the future. He urged to adopt a policy of self-defence towards both the East and the West. He concluded his Miskolc address with the following words: "Our lives and blood for an independent and democratic Hungary!"

This short six-week period no doubt brought about significant progress in the activity of the two parties, especially compared to their previous political performance. This was due primarily to external events, although the definite stand of the left-wing forces of both of parties also played an important part. The establishment of the Bourgeois Section of the Smallholders Party and the renewal of the Agrarian Section (with István Dobi elected its president), and the convening of the national executive committee gave an opportunity for left-wing forces to take a more definite stand. Consequently, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, who advocated a more consistent stand and a break with the Germans, was gaining ground to the detriment of right-wing Ferenc Nagy and Béla Varga. The Italian events, the more loyal attitude of both the Smallholders Party and the government, together with the

pressure of the left wing within the leadership of the SDP, exerted a great influence on Peyer and his circle.

The party alliance, however, was still incapable of finding a solution excluding reliance on the government. None of the sources refer to what they intended to do if the government or the Governor were to disregard the demands of the two parties, that is, if they refused to end the war. The events of the two months elapsing between the landing in Sicily and the Italian capitulation—the series of talks with the government—brought but partial results which only strengthened the illusions concerning the Kállay government, instead of securing a separate peace agreement and turning against the Germans. The Kállay government would not, the left-wing opposition parties *could not or did not dare* to exploit the favorable opportunities presenting themselves in the summer of 1943.

By Autumn 1943, the policy that secession was possible only together with the government and the support of the West had already proved false, and stubborn adherence to it greatly hindered development. Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was fully aware of the fact that Kállay's policy had taken a fatal course; that was the reason why he chose to criticize official government policy openly in his Miskolc speech. However, he, too, was incapable of turning against the government, and only a few days later he publicly assured the government of his support to counterbalance the effects of his Miskolc speech.

Government circles watched Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and the forces around him with increasing irritation. The pro-German wing of the government and the extreme Right used his Miskolc address to launch another attack against the party alliance. The majority of the leadership of the Smallholders Party also disagreed with Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, and from that time on, they did their best to keep him off from public political appearances.

The declaration of the Smallholders Party (announced on 10 September), and the statements of the SDP leaders made it clear that they would not go any further and they struck exactly in the direction whence they would have received most support for anti-Hitlerite struggle. With the pretext of protecting law and order, the declaration condemned the peace demonstration of the Diósgyőr workers and the strike at Csepel (September 1943). The social democratic right wing condemned all kinds of strikes and demonstrations since, in their opinion, these could only further aggravate the situation of the government and cause disturbances. They branded all left-wing action or endeavour "senseless reverie" and "anarchic attempt".

It was, therefore, only too natural that by September 1943, the Peace Party which had welcomed the alliance of the two parties, had been watching with growing anxiety their activity and dangerous illusions concerning the Kállay government. It demanded that the parties lead the nation with a firm hand. In the Summer of 1943 the Peace Party did not reject the idea of a peace treaty secured with the help of Kállay, but protested against excluding the masses from the preparation of the turn of events. By September 1943, it had become clear that Kállay and those around him were unable to break away from Hitler. Therefore, the Peace Party demanded

to overthrow the government and create a new national one instead, relying on all anti-fascist forces.

The Central Committee of the Peace Party clearly saw that the majority of the masses was still not mature enough to take a firm stand and turn against Hitler and especially against Kállay. However, the conditions were ripe and if the parties supported and boosted the activity of the working class, the working peasants and the intellectuals instead of thwarting them, the number of those who embraced the cause of struggle against war waged by Hitler's side could be expected to grow immensely.

V. 2. Activity of the Peace Party Anti-Fascist Political Movements and Actions in the Second Half of 1943

The Peace Party setup was somewhat modified. The members of the Central Committee of the HPC, János Kádár, Gábor Péter, István Szirmai and Pál Tonhauser, remained in the Committee. Two new members were drawn: Ferenc Donáth and László Orbán. Beside the creation of illegal party cells, they also urged the foundation of organizations including not only communists, but everyone ready to fight for peace. Peace Party pamphlets called on the progressive forces to form peace committees which were then to be set up all over the country, especially in villages. It was through them that the communists wished to establish local bodies of national union at places where their party had least influence and where the Smallholders Party and the SDP opposed the joint work of the local organizations. Despite the fact that the party was only in indirect contact (through its pamphlets) with these party organs or peace committees, their work was very significant. They made copies of the publications of the party and distributed them. They organized local bodies of the Peasant League and the Navvies' Section, tried to exert an influence on the already existing organizations and on anti-war activity, and propagated strikes and sabotage actions. Despite their importance in the mobilization of the masses, their influence fell far behind their possibilities, due to their lack of contact with the Peace Party, and especially with each other.

The party succeeded in establishing the central and local party organs of the important regions. They met with great success among the miners, and in the autumn of 1943 the Central Miners' Committee of the Peace Party was founded.

The Peace Party, embracing only a limited number of those concerned in anti-fascist struggle, tried to increase its influence in another field, too.

In the summer of 1943 the Budapest and Kolozsvár printing houses and the smaller printing machines of the Peace Party issued tens of thousands of appeals. The Central Committee attempted to expand with pamphlets the limits of its organizational basis, and the lack of personal contact and direct actions. It also tried to shatter the illusions about Kállay's "see-saw policy". The pamphlets became known to the workers, since they were distributed primarily in workers'

districts in the various industrial centres of the capital and the countryside and in and around factories.

The pamphlets reaching the peasantry had an even greater significance, since in the earlier stages of the war the circulation of communist appeals was restricted to the capital and the bigger towns of the countryside. The Peace Party put an end to this practice. Pamphlets were sent in letters to the village reading circles, farmers' circles, peasant organizations, and to teachers, priests and influential anti-German farmers.

The pamphlet of the Peace Party (September 1943) told the peasants: "*Do not support Hitler's war! Postpone and delay produce delivery! Wait! Hold on! Hide your produce! . . . You fight for peace thereby, for the lives of your sons and husbands, their health and the health of your children! Not one grain of wheat to Hitler and the Kállay government, his hireling!*" It called on the working peasants to set up democratic interest-protecting organizations to be turned gradually into a means of shortening the anti-popular war.

The Peace Party considered it an important task to gain the support of the intellectuals and the youth and to mobilize them. It tried to use the Balatonszárszó youth meeting to promote this end.

The Hungarian Life Bookfriends' Society (*Magyar Élet Könyvbarátainak Társasága*), and the Soli Deo Gloria alliance of Protestant students held a youth conference between 23–29 August, 1943 attended by 600 young people, mostly intellectuals, peasant high-school students of the Györfly College; organized young workers also sent their representatives. The meeting was also attended by the populous group of "populist" writers, Géza Féja, István Sinka, László Németh, János Kodolányi, Sándor Karácsony and leftist József Darvas, Ferenc Erdei, Imre Kovács, Imre Somogyi, Pál Szabó, Péter Veres, István Asztalos and István Nagy. Some leaders of the Smallholders Party—Ferenc Nagy and Béla Varga—were also present; the Agrarian Section was represented by Chairman István Dobi. The SDP ignored the invitation and did not even send observers. The young communist and socialist workers were represented by Mihály Palotás, Sándor Úrffy, Antal Gyenes, Éva Kovács, and others.

The participants actually split into two camps. The majority accepted the third-way concept advanced by Németh, ignoring the struggle of the international forces and concentrating on the Hungarian interests only. The minority referred to Ferenc Erdei's address when expressing their political views endorsing national unity, democratic transformation and the road to socialism as well. István Nagy qualified the plans exposed by László Németh and his friends as an "appeal to national suicide". He pointed to the fact that, in the given circumstances, the third-way policy would mean staying away from the world-wide and national struggle of fascist and anti-fascist forces, and help the reactionary forces striving to save "their leading role until after World War II, for another thousand years". Progress or anti-fascist struggle—there was no third way.

In the debate, the socialist and communist youth, Ferenc Erdei, József Darvas, Péter Veres, István Dobi stuck to the viewpoints of the progressive forces. However,

the majority rejected the communist program of national unity. Although the meeting failed to gain the young intellectuals for the practical tasks of the anti-Hitler union, it was still an important event of the popular-front movement. For a considerable part of the participants it provided the first opportunity to learn about the socialist workers' views on vital national issues. They were interested in, and intrigued by, what they heard and later the events also helped them find the right way. It was thus not accidental that later many became prominent figures of the progressive struggle.

The other youth conference of young workers, peasants and intellectuals was prevented by the joint effort of right-wing social democratic leaders and the Minister of Home Affairs. Communist and socialist youth led by Endre Ságvári planned a large-scale youth meeting for the summer of 1943. The committee of the youth conference worked out a program which met with the approval of both communists and left-wing social democrats and even the Bourgeois Section of the Smallholders Party. Beside the rightful demand of the youth, the program focused on the most vital issue: anti-fascist national unity.

The right-wing leaders of the SDP opposed this plan from the very beginning and even tried to prevent the conference. However, the great interest of the press and mainly of the young workers and peasants compelled them to retreat for the time being. At the July committee session where Szakasits announced the plan of the conference, the right wing seemingly conceded to it. In the committee of the conference, however, they tried to oppose the radical forces and remove the communist representatives. When their attempt failed, they tried to postpone the conference. They managed to prevent that the conference be held in the capital on August 20th (when young peasants could have travelled to Budapest at half price). Since it became more and more clear that the youth conference might cause "unpleasant surprise", Peyer asked the Minister of Home Affairs to forbid it. Keresztes-Fischer granted that and even more: several members of the conference committee were arrested, and the exhibition planned to show the situation of young workers was also prohibited.

Under the impact of international and national events, the slow but general shift to the left gained new impetus. One of the centres of dissatisfaction was the Weiss Manfréd War Factory at Csepel (that had been quiet before) where organized communist and social democratic workers uniformly demanded a 40 per cent wage increase and the improvement of public supplies and working conditions. The movement was supported by Chief Trade Union Shop Steward József Faragó. When the demands were rejected, first the Martin Plant and then the tube-works, too, stopped. The factory's leader played a dual game: talks with the strike leaders began immediately, but at the same time soldiers were ordered to the factory. Although the Martin Plant was occupied by paratroops, the tube-works by officers trained at the Ludovika Military Academy, they could not force the almost five thousand strikers to start work on the first day.

The strike atmosphere enveloped the other plants of the factory also. Therefore, the military headquarters felt it would be better to grant some of the demands, but

they also asked for further military reinforcement. A company of Castle Guards was ordered there, and they began to pick out the leaders of the strike. After a few days, the strike was broken.

The significance of the strike reached far beyond the giant Csepel factory. The authorities were particularly surprised by the fact that the strike took place in a war factory, well supplied with food and well donated. The 17 September summing report of the police described the lively reaction of the workers to the strike: "In general there is much talk among the workers about the strike which, in the given circumstances, they consider a very efficient means of force, for authorities cannot carry out large-scale arrests among the strikers, because they cannot replace the labour force and risk a production decrease."

A few days after the strike at Csepel (on 9 September) manifesters demanded a separate peace treaty at the Diósgyőr Iron Factory. Some 2000 workers of the gun and assembling plants participated in the demonstration. "When they started work in the morning, all the workers were under the influence of the Italian events", Budapest Deputy Chief of Police Sombor-Schweinitzer wrote. "They all agreed that it would be best for Hungary to withdraw from the war, and promptly called on assistant lockman István Oszip (Vice Chairman of the Iron and Metal Workers' Union at Diósgyőr,—I.P.), working at the repair room, to forward their request to the Directorate, while they (some 1500–2000 workers) marched up to its nearby building."

The enquiry held after the demonstration stated that the cause of the action was, beside the Italian events, the economic deterioration of workers' situation and their increased interest in the work of the SDP and the trade unions. This has already been indicated at the trade unions' General Assembly held on 25 August, 1943, attended by some 1200 participants who expressed very radical opinions. The investigation also stated that an ever-increasing number of workers embraced the communist slogan: "Do not make us work for the Germans!" The final report also reveals that the pamphlets of the Peace Party calling on the labour parties to follow the Italian example got into the factories on 8 September. According to the report compiled for the Minister of Defence, the direct cause of the 9 September demonstration was the radio announcement of the Italian ceasefire on the one hand, and the appeal of the Peace Party, on the other.

The responsible ministries came to the conclusion that actions at the two largest war factories and the ensuing strike atmosphere "mark the beginning of a series of events similar to those in 1918–1919" and if strike activity and the demonstrations was not stopped at once it would be impossible to stop it later.

Therefore, various measures were taken in the autumn of 1943. First of all, the military headquarters were reinforced and the important war factories were crammed with political detectives. Several workers considered unreliable were interned or removed from the factories. Four new punitive labour companies were set up, two in the capital and two in the countryside, and were ordered to operational territories at once. On October 5, 1943, the Headquarters of the

Budapest 1st Honvéd Army Corps ordered the commanders of the war factories to use the strongest possible retaliatory measures against any "demonstration, abuse of discipline, or forcible work stoppage". The commanders of the war factories lived up to their new rights, so much so, that the General Staff was compelled to take measures against certain over-eager war factory commanders, as in the Diósgyőr case.

Trade union assemblies were forbidden provisionally in the major war factory centres. The trade union mass rally planned for 12 September at the Ózd Iron Factory and permitted formerly was now banned. Factory commanders and the police and gendarme headquarters in the countryside repeatedly demanded the banning of the trade unions and the SDP, saying that the source of "all trouble" is the trade unions and the communists working in the SDP.

The government, of course, failed to meet these demands, but put them to excellent use in tying right-wing social democrats to the "see-saw policy" pursued by Kállay.

At the beginning of September, a general attack was launched against the Peace Party. On September 7, they began the liquidation of its organizations. The investigation lasted for several months, and entailed arrests in the capital, in Southern Slovakia and in Northern Transylvania. On October 17, the central printing office of the party was discovered. Two members of its Central Committee, István Szirmai and Pál Tonhauser, were arrested, together with some members of the Territorial Committees of Southern Slovakia and Northern Transylvania, including Béla Józsa, Secretary of the Territorial Committee of Northern Transylvania. 75 communists were arrested at Kassa and in its vicinity. During the arrests, several hundreds of communists got into the clutches of the investigating authorities. The arrests affected the Peace Party badly and influenced the activity of the left wing of anti-Hitlerite forces.

Parallel with the terror, the government had to improve the situation of the workers to a certain extent: bread and flour rations were increased, and on several occasions extra portions of fat and bacon were allocated; in several major factories canteens were set up to improve the supply of those participating directly in production. The government made it possible for the largest war factories, e.g. the Weiss Manfréd Works at Csepel to conclude direct contracts ensuring their winter fuel, and contracts with big landowners or peasants to ensure the supply of important foodstuffs, mainly meat, fat, potato, and pulse. An increasing number of large factories obtained right to supply with food not only their workers but also their workers' families who were thus freed from the insecurities caused by temporary shortages of rationed goods and from the enormous queues as well. It would be a mistake to ignore the effect of these measures which no doubt had a serious impact on the politically less developed workers.

The government finally managed to reduce the two major workers' demonstrations taking place in early September to important episodes of the anti-war struggle of the working class instead of letting them become the starting points of a new upswing.

The leftward shift of the workers did not take the form of mass movements; they turned towards the trade unions and the SDP instead, and a general disappointment was felt in the Nazi-type Arrow Cross parties.

The membership of the Arrow Cross parties (according to their own data) decreased from 300 000 in 1940 to 100 000 in 1943. The reports of factory commanders and lord lieutenants all agreed that masses of workers resigned from the Arrow Cross and the right-wing Professional Organization (*Hivatásszervezet*).

While the political impact of the extreme Right decreased, the membership of the trade unions and the Social Democratic Party increased, though at a slower rate; their political influence grew relatively faster. The reason should be sought in the ever-more evident defeat of fascist Germany and its henchmen. Another factor was the growing political activity of the SDP (as compared to the previous years) and the fact that the government handled SDP organization with "benevolence".

The greater freedom of movement granted by the government was not, in practice, a settled issue. The government did not hinder party and trade union activity; moreover, it ordered the responsible organs to permit the re-establishment of social democratic organization. On several occasions, the Minister of Home Affairs was obliged to intervene in order to make local authorities and factory commanders allow the re-establishment of local party and trade union organs, the enlistment of new members and meetings held in the countryside. It is no accident either that the factory party and trade union organs of the capital, the major towns and the villages greatly differed as to their political stance. While "up there" party and trade union leaders were courted, local leaders and members had to carry out a bitter struggle for their sheer existence. This alone suffices to explain why local organizations became the hotbeds of radical left-wing policy. We must also add that—despite the will of right-wing leaders—locally *elected* leaderships were headed by communists or their sympathizers since this was a hazardous enterprise.

The influence and membership of the SDP and trade unions grew most rapidly among the miners, that is, where it had decreased most drastically between 1938 and 1941. From the second half of 1943 on, an inverse process took place. Miners' trade unions, declining at a rapid pace earlier, were now re-established fast one after the other, and were led by communists in most places. The Central Miners' Committee of the Peace Party played an important role in this respect.

The miners criticized sharply the SDP leadership. They demanded a more definite and consistent stand in solving both the tasks directly related to the miners and the national problems. Right-wing social democrats were forced on several occasions to stand up against the "extreme" demands of the miners' unions. They emphasized that only "step-by-step" progress was possible, and the increasing number of "impatient" among the miners should be fought. At the Miners' General Assembly on October 31 Peyer, Sándor Millok and the secretary of the Miners' Union, Ferenc Jelinek, also mentioned "unrest" and "disturbance" in the miners' unions. All three demanded definite action from the local leaders against the "extreme clamouring" of miners.

In November, the TUC held a general recruiting month. The unfolding movement became a real overture to the revival of certain trade unions. Left-wing social democrats and communists considered recruiting a common cause. The results surpassed all expectations. The membership of the Iron and Metal Workers' Union grew by more than six thousand. In nine months, more than a thousand joined the Federation of Hungarian Wood Workers. The electric employees gained 750, the leather workers in November alone 500 new members; construction workers reported a 30 % increase. For the second half of 1943, approximate figures indicate a growth by 15.5 thousand in the membership of the trade unions, that is, they reached their pre-war level again (a hundred thousand members).

Parallel with the strengthening of the trade unions, the membership of the SDP also grew. Besides the workers, a considerable part of the petty bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia also followed the party's activity with increasing sympathy and interest. The SDP leadership made serious efforts to gain the support of these latter layers. In Autumn 1943, a series of meetings were arranged for left-wing journalists, actors and various groups of intellectuals. The leaders of the SDP, especially Illés Mónus, participated in all the meetings and discussions organized by the progressive groups of the intelligentsia. This in itself no doubt contributed to the strengthening of anti-Hitlerite forces. However, the mobilization of the working class was thus somewhat eclipsed, as if it were a task to be fulfilled by the trade unions alone. Also, less and less care was taken of gaining the peasants. Social democratic organizations in both villages and country towns were left to their own resources, although they badly needed help in those grave circumstances. The negative impact of the petty bourgeoisie was also felt in that the social democratic leaders rejected all mass movements ever more strongly.

The leaders made serious efforts to make use of the greater organizational freedom and prepare their élite for "the post-war tasks of the party". They intended to organize leader training courses, which was permitted in the second half of 1943. Beside the Party Centre, there was a Workers' Academy where top party officials were trained. Medium-level functionaries selected from among "the most suitable and most intelligent members" attended the so-called central leader training courses both in the capital and at some countryside centres. Leader training seminars for local cadres were organized by districts, trade unions and also bigger local bodies.

It turned out shortly that the seminars aroused great interest. They were attended by some 50–100 people each, a far greater number than the one planned by the top leadership. The courses were organized at 30 places in Budapest and at another 28 places in the countryside (Szarvas, Kondoros, Nagyszénás, Orosháza, Kecskemét, Csongrád, Szentés, Hódmezővásárhely, Makó, Békéscsaba, Mezőberény, Székesfehérvár, Pápa, Szombathely, Sopron, Kiskunhalas, Vác, Miskolc, Debrecen, Pécs, Nagyvárad, Kolozsvár, Kassa, Érsekújvár, Diósgyőr, Felsőgalla, Dorog, Ózd), and were attended by some 3–4000 people in all. Their program was future-oriented and had a great impact not only on the members, but on the lectures as well. The correspondence related to the courses reflects growing gap between the

party leadership and the members. In most organizations, workers deviated from the guidelines of the party and attacked *Népszava* for its opportunist policy. They claimed that the party "sabotaged" the "idea of cooperation and the treble unity" of workers, peasants and intellectuals. They blamed the leaders for the talks conducted with Kállay and also for the series of compromises. Masses of letters came to the editorial board of *Népszava* urging the party to take a braver step forward, following the example of the fraternal parties. However, the editorial of *Népszava* rejected this impatient and urging tone. Those referring to foreign examples, *Népszava* wrote, disregarded the Hungarian realities, traditions and the momentary political and social situation: Hungarians have to think and act within the framework of the "realities of the country".

Left-wing social democratic leaders supported, although indirectly, more definite and rapid action, a tougher and braver attitude. At the committee meeting at Pécs, Árpád Szakasits emphasized: "We must not wait idly for history to override us; we must not lay back and let happen what may!" He urged the strengthening of the alliance of the Smallholders Party and the SDP, and the increase of the latter's action capacity.

However, the left wing did not represent such a unified power at the medium and top level as in 1941-1942, for instance. The meetings of chairmen and secretaries (earlier attended mostly by left-wing social democrats and communists), through which the organized workers of the capital had been mobilized directly and pressure had been put on the top leadership, were now scarce, and were always dominated by right-wing social democrats. The organized communist network and left-wing social democrats failed to exploit smartly and purposefully the belligerent atmosphere prevailing among the organized workers and their opposition to the opportunism of the top leadership.

Contrarily to the right wing, left-wing social democrats were not frightened by the prospect of revolution and repeatedly emphasized that post-war transformation would most probably be a revolutionary one. Neither did they refuse cooperation with the communists, although they would not act jointly with their party. They were afraid of acting independently for fear of endangering the legality of their own party and the trade unions. In 1941-1942, the end of the war still seemed far away; by 1943 it had come much closer. They were also influenced by the harmful view that the truly great task of organized workers lies in the future, and if their organizations would be destroyed by then, they would be handicapped in the great wave of transformation compared to the other parties. They did not confide fully in the workers either; they were not sure they would adhere to a definite anti-German line. Even today, it would be difficult to decide whether they were right or wrong. There is no doubting the fact, however, that it was not the party leadership that led the masses, but rather the other way round; often, the stance of the latter made the former take steps forward, however slowly.

No SDP action failed for the lack of mass support; on the contrary, the active participation of the workers often surpassed by far the expectations of the party leadership. The sweeping success of the leader training courses has already been

mentioned. Similar enthusiasm, a similar degree of mass participation was reported from the SDP country meetings held in the autumn of 1943. The mass rallies at Pécs on October 4 and at Kolozsvár on November 7 were attended not only by the workers and peasants of those towns, but also by those of the neighbourhood. At the mass meetings held in two towns of the Stormy Corner, Kondoros and Makó in September 1943, attendance was even greater, although they were risking police denigration.

The *Népszava* campaign in November 1943 was one of the excellent achievements of the joint action of social democratic and communist workers. The party organizations in the vicinity of Pest gave out the slogan: "Ten thousand new subscribers to *Népszava*!" The action became a common cause of all organized workers and the number of subscribers rose by 12 500 instead of the 10 000. During the action tens of thousands of workers got involved in politics and, according to the estimates of the SDP, the most class-conscious workers got in touch with some 150 000 people.

In the second half of 1943, the struggle of the landowning peasants focused upon the refusal of produce delivery, that of the poor peasants on the constant demands of wage increase, the improvement of public supplies, especially clothes and shoes. According to our data, the only significant event occurred at Mezőtúr. As the Chief of Police reported on September 21, 1943, some 500 people, mainly women, gathered in front of the Town House demanding that the war be ended.

Parallel with the economic struggle the political activity of the poor peasantry also increased, as indicated by the meetings of the Smallholders Party at Kaposvár, Szentes, Komárom, Gyoma, Tolna, Székesfehérvár and at other places. The increasing political activity was reflected by the greater activity of the local organizations and navvies' sections of the Peasant League, after the agricultural season had come to an end. On October 31, István Dobi discussed the changed attitude of the peasantry in *Szabad Szó*. Mihály Keresztes, the Orosháza Social Democratic Party Secretary reported a process of under-surface fermentation. In the autumn of 1943, he visited the towns and villages of the Stormy Corner, and summed up his experiences and impressions as follows: "*A strong decline of messianism is experienced...* It is surprising how simple peasants analyze the events." The problems of democracy and freedom have become permanent topics of conversation even among navvies.

Resistance was even stronger in minority territories suffering from greater oppression. In Northern Transylvania, the number of deserters was exceptionally high. A report submitted by the Minister of Home Affairs to the Cabinet estimated the number of those who escaped from Northern Transylvania to Romania (fearing enlistment and the soldiers) to be between 8-10 000. According to the Minister, several hundreds of armed people were hiding in the mountains. The situation was similar in Southern Slovakia. In Carpathian Ukraine partisan struggle was emerging. The fact that the partisans of Kovpak had already reached the Hungarian border in the Carpathians and, moreover, that many of the men were Hungarian soldiers, was considered very dangerous.

The situation was severest in the occupied territories of Yugoslavia. In September alone the partisans set on fire a dozen of the large hemp-processing factories of the South. Successful actions (e.g. railway explosions, break of the telephone and the cable network, etc.), followed one another. Powerful military and gendarme units, led by Lieutenant General Szilárd Bakay, were put into action to eliminate the partisan groups. Their successes, however, were but provisional.

At the end of September, the Cabinet (on the initiative of the Minister of Home Affairs) gave its assent to the extraordinary use of the weapons of the special police to avert partisan attacks and sabotage actions in Bácska, and in the Hungarian-Croatian and the Carpathian-Ukrainian border regions. Later on, in December 1943, this measure was extended to the Kolozsvár and Marosvásárhely local gendarme commands.

In the Bácska region, arrests and severe sentences followed one another. On October 7, 1943, 34 persons were sentenced to prison by the Court of the Chief of Staff. At the same time, the gendarmerie handed over some 60 people to the Szeged Army Corps Headquarters. In the second half of October, the Court of the Chief of Staff passed severe sentences, death sentences, too, against 134 communists.

V. 3. Failure of Kállay's Breakaway Attempts

At the end of 1943 and at the beginning of 1944, the position of those Western-oriented groups that were still serving Hitler became ever more hopeless. The see-saw policy came very near to total failure. It has become very pressing indeed to decide whether the anti-Hitlerite forces would change their mistaken policy in time and try to break with Hitler or, on pretext of defending the regime and "fighting bolshevism", they would throw the country at the mercy of Nazi Germany.

The end-1943 events on the front did not favour Kállay's ideas. In Italy the front stiffened and a British-American landing on the Balkans had become rather hopeless. The Red Army went on liberating new territories in the East and by the beginning of 1944 approached the Hungarian border by a few hundred kilometres.

Soviet military successes naturally had a favourable impact on the anti-fascist coalition; the prestige of the Soviet Union was on the rise, and cooperation predominated over the differences and contradictions. This was reflected at the talks held by the British, American and Soviet Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Moscow, in October 1943, and at the Teheran meeting (at the end of November) of President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and Prime Minister Stalin. As to the main issue, i.e. the military and political destruction of Nazi Germany, both meetings reflected full agreement. The establishment of a second front in Western Europe was decided on, and with it Churchill's long-cherished plan, the Balkan landing—the sole hope of Kállay and his circles—was taken off the agenda. The events proved beyond any doubt that the see-saw policy was lacking all foundation. Kállay, however, shifted to the right, not the left, under the influence of the events.

Both this reaction and the situation of the parties in Hungary gained clear expression at the October–December, 1943 Parliamentary session.

The government decided to convene the Parliament adjourned for months to discuss the budget. This move served a double aim: to document "Hungary's constitutional and parliamentary nature" and to prove that the country and the majority of the political parties gave their unanimous support to the government.

The convocation of Parliament was awaited with great interest. The extreme right wing was preparing for the ousting of the Kállay government. The anti-Hitlerite opposition parties expected that the most urgent issues would be put on the agenda. "In the hall of Parliament, the group of SDP and ISP MPs, small in number but representing the majority of the working people and consequently of an outstanding importance both inside and outside [Parliament], *might be able to express the opinion and will of the Hungarian industrial workers and peasants*", left-wing social democrats wrote in an article banned by censorship.

In his Parliamentary address on November 12, the Prime Minister tried to elucidate the main principles of his policy and made an attempt to disassociate himself from Hitler's fascism, emphasizing the specifically Hungarian features of his policy. One of the main tasks of the nation, he said, was to recognize that the country "has got into the focus of the struggle of three superpowers", that is, the front would soon reach the Hungarian frontier. Therefore, "our military preparedness must be intensified as much as possible with all the available powers. We do not think of attack", he added, "but the defence of our borderlines is subject to no political considerations; it is not even a question of military capacity, but a national obligation to be met, a question of life or death for the nation." The country's capacity to resist depends on "assuring internal order... in all circumstances". "If we are swept away by the struggle of the great powers, we could be excused", Kállay said, "but... if our internal order were upset and that was to aggravate our situation and prospects and upset our ranks, if we succumbed ourselves, there would be no excuse for us". "It is no excuse that we could not have known what would happen: the example of 1918 had proved that even that may happen which had never been thought possible", he added. "War is the germ of all social revolution", that we should not forget.

Another part of Kállay's address to Parliament is worth quoting: "As for bolshevism, I wish to say the following... From the minute I occupied my post, my whole foreign and internal policy was determined by the struggle against bolshevism, both its power and its penetration endeavours..."

Kállay announced a "national unity" embracing everyone, from right-wing social democrats to the Arrow Cross, and asked for the support of both Parliament and the Upper House on two closely related issues: 1) the mobilization of all military forces against the Soviet Army closing in on the borders of the country; 2) the defence of internal order, and fight against bolshevism.

Thus the policy of the Kállay government actually meant further support for Nazi Germany, despite the Prime Minister's attempts to disassociate himself from Hitler and to make government policy seem independent of the war waged

alongside the fascist aggressors, and wishing to serve the self-defence of the country alone.

Kállay deluded himself with the hope that by disassociating himself from Nazi Germany and deploying Hungarian units only to defend the Carpathians, he might avoid a "Soviet attack". He thought that maybe even the Germans consider this reasonable, especially since the Hungarian economic and military capacity could still be made to serve the German interests that way.

Kállay's efforts, however, failed to win him the support of right-wing circles. Despite the identity of their basic concept, that is, anti-Sovietism, their policies differed greatly: the Right condemned the government for not supporting Hitler "with full faith and conviction" and for granting the "destructive" forces so great an influence. They launched a concentrated attack against the left-wing party alliance as well as against the Peasant League; they demanded the banning of the SDP and the trade unions, strict censorship of the left-wing papers and the banning of the left-wing parties' right to assembly. For themselves, they demanded free movement and organization.

In his address on December 4, Kállay said that there was "a gap" between the government and the extreme right wing, since the latter subordinated "Hungarian interests" to German interests unconditionally, whereas he himself would not do that. He declared that he did not intend to ban the left-wing parties.

But Kállay soon withdrew and sought to improve cooperation with the extreme right wing. After Teheran, the Prime Minister was compelled to see his ideas fail one after the other. But he still did not come to the conclusion that he should start negotiating with the Soviet Union and the democratic Hungarian forces and choose the only right way leading out of the war. On the contrary, although he maintained his relations with the West, he wanted to rely even more on Hitler and his Hungarian followers against the Eastern "danger". In his Parliamentary address on December 16, he already said that, similarly to Imrédy, he was of the opinion that Hungary should stick to her allies, and that he himself would do his utmost to bring the extreme right wing and the government closer to each other. This was the first time when the extreme right wing applauded Kállay's address, and Kállay and Imrédy, the two "opponents" shook hands in the corridors of Parliament.

And what was done or suggested by the anti-Hitlerite Parliamentary opposition? Representatives of the Smallholders and the Social Democratic Parties virtually reiterated their political views expressed in their June 1943 memorandum and at their talks with Kállay. Ferenc Nagy, and especially Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, but Géza Malasits, Lajos Kabók and Károly Peyer, too, criticized the government's war policy very sharply. They described Hungary's entry into the war as anti-constitutional and illegitimate. They demanded that the government should draw the necessary conclusions of the breaking up of the Tripartite Pact and launch an investigation against those who had been responsible for the Voronezh catastrophe. The representatives of both parties stated that they would continue to adhere to the principles of party alliance.

They (especially the social democrats) criticized sharply the government's social policy, war-tax policy (an ever greater burden on workers), its new economic policy (which not only failed to decrease the gap between prices and wages but even increased it). They criticized maltreatment that had become general in the factories, speculation with estates confiscated from the Jews, etc. However, their addresses were not directed against Kállay's repeatedly announced concept of "national unity"; moreover, the Smallholders' Party warmly welcomed Kállay's address: "There can be and there are differences of opinions. There is only one issue on which we must agree: all personal interests and all considerations of party policy are to be put aside in the service of the greater unit, the nation", Zoltán Tildy, President of the Smallholders' Party emphasized. At the same time, Ferenc Nagy protested against the allegations that his party and the Peasant League led by it would work to prepare revolution and bolshevism.

Károly Peyer spoke in a similar spirit: "Despite the acute political contradiction separating us from almost all the political parties of the House ... there are common fields where we can still meet despite our political contradictions, the most important of these being the independence of the country, the integrity of its territory, the maintenance of peace and order. These are the issues ... on which we whole-heartedly offer all the service and support which we can give to the country..." He definitely refused the charges that the SDP endeavoured to repeat 1918. Kállay accepted the offer of the SDP leaders and promised that the government would follow with interest the party's activity.

Right-wing social democrats reiterated their loyalty to the government in public at the great committee meeting held at Miskolc on December 12, 1943. This meeting was of great importance for several reasons. It was the first occasion when the SDP leadership gave account of the skirmishes in Parliament which had been kept secret because of the censorship. It was also the first opportunity for the leadership to express their views after having drawn the conclusions of the Teheran Conference since *Népszava* had given a full report of the Moscow and then of the Teheran Conferences without, however, taking a side and it had also outlined the Western response to them.

At the committee meeting Anna Kéthly gave account of the Parliamentary session instead of Károly Peyer who had fallen ill. She emphasized that the party would support the government not only in words but in deeds as well in all fields promised by Károly Peyer in Parliament.

The gist of Ferenc Szeder's address was that the SDP would do its utmost "to prevent the repetition of the 1918-19 events provided that they can carry out political preparation."

Right-wing social democrats had never before denied the revolutionary achievements of 1918, the marvellous revolutionary deed of the Hungarian people, primarily of the Hungarian working class, as it was done by Ferenc Szeder at the meeting. "When the storm is above us, we look for a means, an opportunity to save what we may together, unitedly...", to avoid another 1918.

At the beginning of 1944, the addresses of the right-wing leaders at the meetings of the Social Democratic Party or the Smallholders Party never lacked Kállay's slogans about the defence of the borders, territorial integrity, etc. Despite the warnings coming from the West, they were unable to understand that it was impossible to end the war and turn against Germany without relying on the Soviet Union. However, by that time they had already known General János Kiss's study stating that "Hungary must, under no circumstances, succumb to the German intent of occupation; on the other hand, Hungary should develop quite a serious military resistance in spite of her present internal military troubles, and, thirdly, Hungarian resistance must be undertaken even if its success is not probable". Bajcsy-Zsilinszky added to Kiss's statement: "Preventive measures will not provoke German occupation as much as the complete lack of them". He bravely voiced, together with the communists, that Hungary had to end the war and turn against the Germans. Kállay therefore forbid the papers to publish a word of his speeches and on December 3 he called on him in a private letter to withdraw from political life. Bajcsy-Zsilinszky *was seriously attacked by his own party, too*.

After these attacks Bajcsy-Zsilinszky withdrew from Parliament and did not attend the meetings of the party either. In his letter written to Tildy, he pointed out: "If I considered these offences and my self-esteem alone, I ought to resign from the party as well, but that I will not do... since I do not know whether the masses of our party would not agree—on the principal issues—with my sharper and more definite expressions and faster pace, if only they could be asked".

At the claim of the extreme right wing, the government banned the SDP leader training courses and did not object to the suspension of the mandates of Peyer, Kéthly and János Csorba, although it did prevent their arrests. More and more obstacles were put in the way of the organization of the Social Democratic and the Smallholders Parties.

At the same time, the organizational activity of the extreme right wing became freer. It was no accident that, after the government's more tolerant policy, the Arrow Cross launched new attacks against the social democratic organizations and their leaders. In January 1944, social democratic leaders were attacked and meetings were provoked at Kassa, Pestlőrinc, Pécs and at other places.

The government was ready to meet the new German demands. They consented to the Germans' setting up an 80-strong air command at Dobogókő. In December, when at commercial negotiations the Germans—according to the words of the Finance Minister—"created conditions absolutely unacceptable for us", the Cabinet decided for the talks.

When the impeachment of the principal criminals of the Újvidék massacre could no longer be postponed, it was the government that cleared the ground for them to flee to Germany.

Because of the favours he granted to the right, Kállay's position seemed to have strengthened provisionally. He managed to avoid that the right wing should propound the issue of confidence again, and Parliamentary opposition parties ensured the government of their support on the most important issues. The Upper

House also supported the policy of the government. A growing number of statements from responsible government officials suggested that the Soviet troops approaching the Hungarian borders intended to crush the peaceful construction and the calm, order, relative well-being and peace enjoyed practically here alone in the whole of belligerent Europe. Hungary only protects her frontiers and existence, they said, and has nothing to do with the war of the Great Powers.

They wished to win over the national minorities and, therefore, at the end of 1943, Kállay visited national minority areas and offered them "the olive branch". However, he insisted that, "in the Carpathian Basin, only the Hungarians were and are capable of establishing lasting peace, calm and security; only the Hungarians can form a state". Attempts were made in Northern Transylvania and in the Carpathian-Ukraine to set up a Romanian and a Ruthenian party, respectively. The government exerted strong propaganda at the jubilee celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of Kossuth's death. Hungary's participation in World War II was unscrupulously compared to the War of Independence led by Kossuth.

By the end of 1943—after Moscow and Teheran—it had become necessary for the communists to plainly tell the leaders of the democratic parties that their policy not only served government aims but even plunged the masses into a catastrophe.

At the end of 1943 and at the beginning of 1944, the Peace Party summarized the standpoint of the communists in several memoranda of historic significance. They entered into a controversy with the (sometimes reactionary) views hindering the activity of the anti-fascist camp, and repeatedly proposed to establish a fighting anti-fascist, democratic front and its political platform. They served this aim by publishing in March 1944 *Béke és Szabadság* (Peace and Freedom), the central party paper, after nearly two years.

The Peace Party gave most emphasis to the fact that, in the post-Moscow and -Teheran era, all endeavours disregarding the Soviet Union and taking into account the Anglo-Saxon powers only led, of necessity, to a false and unrealistic policy. The anti-Hitlerite camp had, at last, to accept the fact that the two conferences dealt a smashing blow not only on Hitler's coalition, but also on the forces within the camp of the anti-fascist allies, that were busy devising anti-Soviet plans. The Peace Party pointed out that in this situation Kállay could have had his pro-German policy accepted, his position temporarily stabilized not only in Parliament, but to a certain degree among the working people, too, because anti-Hitlerite forces continued helping him and displayed a benevolent passivity. "Reactionary forces score a great success—the memorandum of the Peace Party wrote—if the leaders of the democratic front voice the slogans of the government instead of the fighting slogans of the masses: 'Not another 1919', 'We shall maintain order', 'We are a constitutional country', 'We are a constitutional state', 'We shall protect our borders', etc; reactionary forces score a great success if the democratic opposition spends its time preparing post-war plans, *and thus virtually acknowledges the priority and intangibility of Hitler's war and gives free hands for its continuation.*"

They revealed that the government and the political forces behind it garbled the story of the bourgeois democratic revolution of 1918, and also that they created the

appearance that the Trianon peace treaty was first of all the result of the 1918 revolution. They stated that he who turned against 1918 also turned against "the possibility of internal renewal", and the democratic transformation of the country even if his program included democratic demands.

The Peace Party emphasized that in the given situation the only way out was a separate peace treaty. They tried to destroy the manoeuvre of the reactionary forces which refused the demands of a separate peace on pretext of a possible German occupation, pointing out that if the government really wanted to secede, it would not concentrate its forces on the destruction of the democratic forces, which could be used against a German attack, but would, on the contrary, support them. In this case, the risks of turning against the Germans would be reduced significantly.

They pointed out the reactionary character of the protection-of-borders stance: "We wage this war alongside aggressive powers; our war does not become a defensive one if, due to a change of power relations, the territory of our country will be turned into a theatre of war. Hungary's war remains Hitler's war until the nation abandons its present foreign policy, breaks away from Hitler's system of alliance and ends hostility towards the democratic powers... (The answer to the question) against which forces Kállay wants to protect our national existence and our borders, the communists argued, whether his preparations are not aimed at a possible change of side, whether they are directed against Hitler, or rather in concert with him against the approaching Red Army can be doubtful only to those who judge the policy of the reactionary forces not by their deeds... but by their hypocritical political clichés."

Finally the Peace Party emphasized that it was most important that mass activity be increased by the time of the total failure of the government's policy. Therefore, the main task of the leaders of the democratic camp was to lead the masses in their struggle, to give a good example, and bravely rely on masses. Instead of defence and subservience, an attack, the establishment of a democratic national front relying on the activity of the masses, was needed.

The Peace Party sent these documents to the leaders of the SDP, the Smallholders Party, the Peasant League, its Navvies' Section, to the peasant correspondents of *Szabad Szó*, MPs of anti-German sentiments, public personalities with a democratic way of thinking, that is, to all those who were interested in setting up a democratic front. The memoranda of the Peace Party became important, because they reached the democratic forces at a time when circumstances favoured the elimination of mistakes; the influence of the left wing increased within the camp of anti-Hitlerite forces, despite the submissive policy of the right wing, and the activity of the masses was on the rise again.

Sabotage actions—though sporadic and mainly individual—became more frequent. There were numerous big fires due to sabotage. In some large factories, e.g. in Hofherr, Láng, Ganz Wagon, in coal mines, mainly at Tata and Salgótarján, and also at other places there were slowdowns of work, and serious sabotage actions directed by local cells of the Peace Party.

Arrow-Cross attacks against the social democrats created favourable possibilities for the mobilization of both organized and unorganized workers. The former took steps to defend their local organizations and urged the party leadership to launch definite actions against the Arrow-Cross men. At the all-steward meeting held in the Ironworkers' Home in February 1944, Peyer himself called upon the organized workers to hit back resolutely. At the meeting—though the tone of Peyer's speech was unusually sharp—part of the trade union stewards, mainly those from Csepel, gave voice to their dissatisfaction over the work of the party leadership. In certain workers' districts, at Újpest, Kispest and Pesterzsébet, radical meetings were held without the leadership's knowledge. The atmosphere of the miners' meetings—according to social democratic leaders—recalled 1918 ever more strongly. They attacked the passive policy of right-wing leaders. The Miners' Trade Union tried to fight the increasing pressure by promising to "exclude the extreme left wing" from the Federation. At Tatabánya and at other places, too, communists organized action groups, armed groups to carry out explosions so as to embark on a more effective course of resistance.

The number of those intellectuals who sought to establish relations with the workers increased. At the end of 1943 and at the beginning of 1944 several "friendly discussions" took place between workers and intellectuals who "exchanged information" on the military and political situation and discussed jointly the appeals of Radio Kossuth and Radio Petőfi. Already at that time, illegal intellectual circles were formed which issued anti-Hitler and anti-government pamphlets.

The actions to improve the prison conditions of communists arrested in 1942 and to save the lives of communists Pál Tonhauser, László Pataki, Hédi Szirmai and Sándor Szekeres, sentenced to death at Székesfehérvár on February 2, 1944, gave evidence of the increasing political influence of the Peace Party, the gradual strengthening of the left wing inside the anti-Hitlerite camp.

At the request of communists, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky intervened on behalf of the condemned communists at State Secretary Miklós Bonczos and then at Minister of Justice László Radocsay. Anna Kéthly also tried to do something for these communists, and so did General Cseh, who was responsible for the arrested on behalf of the General Staff. Several left-wing politicians—mainly leaders of the Transylvanian Party (*Erdélyi Párt*)—seriously condemned the torture of communists arrested in the autumn of 1943, especially the murder of Béla Józsa. However, the position of communists hardly changed at all. Therefore, at the beginning of 1944, a new action was launched. During these actions Bajcsy-Zsilinszky suggested that the Minister of Justice should set up a committee of government, party and opposition politicians to supervise prison conditions. This new demand bore some result, but, because of the German occupation, it could not be met.

The action launched for saving the lives of the four communists sentenced to death proved successful. The country-wide indignation caused by the escape to Germany of the officers responsible for the Újvidék massacre and brought to trial no doubt played a part in that. Anti-German writers, public personalities, certain representatives of the anti-Hitlerite parties protested, on the initiative of

communists, against death sentences and demanded their reprieve in a memorandum sent to the Prime Minister. While organizing the protest action, the Peace Party issued pamphlets in tens of thousands of copies to make the action launched for saving the lives of communists condemned to death more effective. As a result of the widespread, joint stand, Chief of Staff Ferenc Szombathelyi changed the death sentences to life imprisonment and 15 years in prison, respectively.

Despite all government regulations, the organization of the democratic forces advanced at a quick pace in the villages, too. Navvies' sections were set up one after the other in the autumn of 1943 in Transdanubia, between the Danube and the Tisza, in the territory East of the Tisza, and in Southern Slovakia. By the beginning of 1944, the territory East of the Tisza had become the most important base of the Navvies' Section. Seeing the results, the leadership of the Navvies' Section decided to convene a congress. The government turned down their request twice, in December, 1943, and then in January 1944. At the third occasion, the request was finally granted.

Before the congress, the Committee of the Navvies' Section set up a five-strong committee led by communist Ferenc Iliás to elaborate the program of the navvies.

On February 13, 1944, the delegates of eight counties (Békés, Bihar, Csongrád, Heves, Borsod, Komárom, Somogy, Zólyom) and the navvies of the Stormy Corner, some 1500—2000 people, gathered for the congress at Vésztő. After the addresses of Ferenc Nagy and István Dobi, the program of the navvies was presented and met with unanimous approval. The majority of the speakers advocated the cause of the independence and the freedom of the country, and took a stand against those who were "waiting for the plums to fall into their mouth" and "shuddered at activity". The Congress managed to secure the acceptance of the Peace Party program including the gathering of all national forces, a radical land reform, and the creation of an independent, free and democratic Hungary.

This first action of the agrarian proletariat gave excellent proof of the fact that the organization of the poor peasantry had improved significantly within a short six-month period of time. It proved that great masses of the peasantry had joined the anti-fascist movement becoming ever-more radical and promising more result than ever before. This process had an impact on the left wing of the party alliance of social democrats and smallholders, too.

After the Moscow talks of the ministers of foreign affairs of the anti-fascist coalition and the Teheran talks of the coalition's prime ministers, it has dawned on the pro-Western circles of the ruling classes, and especially on their most prominent representatives, István Bethlen, Antal Sigray, Károly Rassay and others, that the Kállay government would be unacceptable even for the Western Powers. At the same time, they noticed that the interest of the West towards the leaders of the alliance of the Social Democratic and the Smallholders Parties had grown. Bethlen and his followers, having the state power in their hands through Kállay, considered the party alliance harmless for the regime, and therefore did not oppose its establishment. But they did not even want to hear about its becoming the future basis of state power. They considered the party alliance unsuitable to carry out the

inevitable post-war reforms in a way that would satisfy the majority of the ruling classes. Therefore, the pro-Western circles of the bourgeoisie set out to form a group that was meant to disrupt the alliance of the two parties and then to establish a bourgeois block of pro-Western politicians and members of the Smallholders Party.

They prepared the draft program of the bourgeois block, the Democratic Bourgeois Alliance. The statutory document set out its main task as follows: "At the end of World War I, the proletariat, lacking all experience in governing, could manage to come to power because of the weakness, unpreparedness and competition of the political parties. In order to avert a similar national disaster, every bourgeois political party and non-party politicians, not responsible for the events of the near past, must put aside all personal and party considerations and, agreeing on the basic, main principles, make an attempt to establish a unified bourgeois front."

The document listed the main principles of the bourgeois alliance in ten points. A few of them contained democratic demands in general. The majority, however, were statements aimed at saving the regime for the future. Thus, for example, Point 2 considered it possible that, in a favourable international situation, "at the right time a legal Hungarian kingdom could be established". Point 5 declared the inviolability of private property. It rejected land reforms considering land-political measures already taken or promised sufficient. Expropriation of any kind was considered feasible only in the most justified cases of public interest and with full recompensation. Points 7 and 8 demanded that state interference in private enterprises be weakened. The draft tried to keep the Communist Party from gaining legality in the "new order", stating that "no political movement rejecting the basic principles laid down in the [above] points and protected by valid punitive laws should be permitted". After the completion of the propaganda-draft, a series of talks began, promising full success at first.

The draft program and especially the negotiations left no doubt as to the firm determination of the adherents of the bourgeois block to include no one, not even the SDP into their group and their unwillingness to acknowledge the SDP's party alliance with the smallholders. They generously permitted the Social Democratic Party to support "national unity" from without, "on the basis of a separate agreement with the block". The conference of the Smallholders Party agreed that the party leadership should start negotiations on the issue of joining the bourgeois block, but they insisted that the SDP should be included. However, breaking the orders of the meeting, smallholder leaders Ferenc Nagy and Béla Varga delegated for the negotiations virtually accepted the Bethlen-Rassay proposal: they were ready to disrupt the alliance of the two parties and join the Democratic Bourgeois Alliance instead, and ratified this with their signature, too. The membership of the Smallholders Party, and even part of the leadership, ignored the agreement completely.

When the social democratic left wing learned about the creation of the bourgeois block and about the Smallholders Party's joining, the leadership of the SDP, under

the pressure of the left wing, launched an immediate protest. They stated that were Tildy and his company to consider the adherence of the Smallholders Party to the block and the disruption of the party alliance an accomplished fact, they would immediately make public the reactionary step taken by the Smallholders Party and would mobilize both the masses of workers and peasants and the progressive intellectuals against it. The left wing of the ISP, the Bourgeois Section, also became active. On February 25, 1944, a meeting of the Smallholders Party was convened, where Bajcsy-Zsilinszky put forward a draft resolution condemning the unprincipled joining of the bourgeois block, and demanded that the party meeting should declare that "on the one hand, they will enter no further party grouping which might disturb or loosen cooperation with the SDP, to which the SDP would not give its consent and, on the other hand, despite his serious anxieties, they would not wish to break negotiations with the inventors of the bourgeois block..." Bajcsy-Zsilinszky also proposed that Zoltán Tildy should attend the talks instead of Ferenc Nagy and Béla Varga. In view of the stand of the social democrats and the lively protest of the left wing of the ISP, the party meeting postponed its decision.

This clash opened the eyes of even the right-wing social democrats; they urged the strengthening of the party alliance that was hardly functioning any more. In the wake of the events, the left wings of both parties recognized, in connection with the organization of the bourgeois block, that they had to pursue a more definite policy, and even turn against the right wings of their own parties, if necessary, and both became more active. The strengthening of the left wings of the two parties and their joint stand played an important part in the establishment of the unity front which later included the communists, too.

Almost simultaneously with the above events, a discussion took place on February 11 at Prime Minister Kállay's place attended by Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, Jenő Tombor and István Barankovics. The politicians blamed Kállay for his repeated concessions to Hitler and the extreme right wing. Bajcsy-Zsilinszky reminded the Prime Minister of the direct danger of a German occupation as well as a putch of the extreme right wing relying on the Germans. He demanded resolute action and deeds from the government. Kállay, however, accused Bajcsy-Zsilinszky of "playing with the interests of the country one-sidedly and frivolously". Immediately after the talks, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky wrote a letter to Kállay, enumerating minutely the fatal steps taken by the government, and the absurdities of "national unity" as understood by Kállay. He even commented on his own earlier policy in support of Kállay with brave self-criticism: "I feel that I may once be rightfully blamed for not being sharp and determined enough in these times; for not keeping a great-enough distance from the government... I am not sure I brought no future harm to the country thereby.—But one thing is certain; if I did err, I erred on the side of caution and loyalty, rather than letting myself be carried away unconscientiously and frivolously." At the end of his letter he declared it as a prophecy (siding with the memorandum of the Peace Party after all) that "...the road the government proceeds on inevitably leads to ... the dishonour and catastrophe of a Quisling regime... to the final and world-historic failure of the Hungarian state." One more

sentence of his letter should be added: "If the Quisling government comes and I will still be alive, I shall take up arms against it."

In the spring of 1944, the Soviet Army launched a new sweeping attack against the fascist troops. During the offensive, the Soviet Army rapidly approached the borders of Hungary and by the beginning of March it had reached the pre-mountains of the Carpathians. Had the Kállay government really considered the saving of the country and the break with Hitler its primary task, this would have provided them with ample opportunity to secede. By January–February 1944, Hungarian diplomats accredited to Western countries and identifying themselves with Kállay's anti-Soviet plans had already been convinced that there was only one way out: the government had to ask the Soviet Union to grant them a ceasefire. György Barcza, special envoy to Switzerland of the Kállay–Bethlen group, reported on February 18, 1944 that, according to Western opinions, the defence of the Carpathians was an entirely hopeless affair. He advised that, as soon as the Red Army had reached the Carpathians, the Hungarian government break with the Germans and get in touch with the Soviets at once to ask for peace with the Soviet Union.

But Kállay and the pro-Western groups of the Hungarian ruling classes were not willing to grasp this opportunity; they could not step over their class barriers, nor could they turn to the "East", the neighbouring Soviet Union, instead of the remote "West". Although in February 1944, they made one more attempt to withdraw the one hundred thousand Hungarian soldiers from the Eastern Front, their aim was not to cease the anti-Soviet war, but to deploy these units on the Hungarian border; their hope that these troops could stop the great Soviet Army is a sure sign of their stupidity as well. On February 15, the Cabinet ordered the mobilization of 40 000 people also to be sent to the Carpathians. The government also decided to order general mobilization the moment the Soviet troops reached the line of Lvov.

The following are the words of a politician driven to the wall, unable to change the situation: "The motto of our foreign policy is: Leave the Magyar alone! While we are not hurt we shall not hurt."

V. 4. The German Occupation of Hungary Formation of the Hungarian Front

From the spring of 1943 on, Hitler had been watching the policy of the Kállay government with increasing vigilance and repugnance. By Autumn 1943, the plan of Hungary's occupation (codenamed Margarete I) had already been prepared.

Although by Spring 1944, the German political and military leadership had been well aware of the fact that the secession-plan of Kállay and his followers did not reach the implemental phase, they could take no risks because of the military events of the Eastern Front.

The Spring 1944 offensive of the Red Army in Galicia destroyed the forces of Heeresgruppe Süd. At that important German strategic front, a 200 to 300

kilometres wide gap emerged between the troops in Romania and those withdrawn to the north of the Carpathian mountains. The Germans did not have enough reserves to close the front, and thus a gate opened to Hungary, i.e. a direct road to Germany, through the Carpathian mountains, and finally it had become possible to launch a new offensive against the Balkans through Romania. The Germans could maintain their links with the oil fields in Romania and the Balkan states only through Hungary. In the spring of 1944, therefore, our country became a strategically important territory for Germany.

Accordingly, Hitler decided in favour of carrying out Margarethe I, that is, the Nazi occupation of Hungary. The exact form of the occupation, however, remained an open question even after the preparations had begun. The General Staff insisted on open military occupation, while politicians proposed a combinative solution. Hitler and his closest collaborators accepted a combination of political and military solutions.

They saw that because of the catastrophic military, political and economic position of the *Reich*, they could not use force without risking a new anti-German front in Hungary. Using open force in Hungary "would mean military, political and economic chaos... *The country would become a centre of resistance*, something to be taken into consideration, with special regard to the current German military situation, since it would mean the pinning down of several German divisions." Furthermore, open intervention could be expected to deal a severe blow on the production of Hungarian war industry and the crop results, so important for the German war machine. The mobilization of Hungary's large human reserves would become much more difficult, or perhaps even impossible. A disadvantageous outcome of the occupation would have an adverse effect on the situation of the Balkan countries, for it could disrupt the only route of German reserves to the Eastern Front in the foreground of Carpathians and to the Balkans.

The Germans were of the opinion that the fear of the Hungarian ruling classes of the Soviet Union and bolshevism was so great, and the arrival of the British and American troops so unlikely, that under the impact of the rapid approach of the Soviet Army "even those forces of the upper strata that are most hostile to us" would become mature enough to accept German occupation.

On March 18, 1944, Horthy was summoned to Klessheim, Hitler's general headquarters. Although his travel was accompanied by heated controversies first at home, and then at the general headquarters, between the Governor and Hitler, Horthy finally agreed to Hungary's German occupation, though he felt greatly offended. He remained on his post, thus confirming the occupation, and set out to appoint a government that would meet German demands.

On March 19, German fascist troops occupied Hungary up to the line of the river Tisza without meeting with any significant opposition. Hungarian troops resisted only where the order of the Chief of Staff forbidding opposition had not arrived, that is, around Sopron, Győr, Budaörs and Székesfehérvár. Serious clashes occurred at Újvidék only, where the Germans went so far as to disarm the Hungarian units. The strategic points of the capital were occupied by German

troops, and by the time Budapesters had waken up, the bridges, the Radio, the police headquarters, the most important ministries and the Castle were all held by the Nazis.

Prior to, or simultaneously with, the move of the c. 9 German divisions, a number of SS people, some 500 to 600 Gestapo agents, some 300 members of the Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst*) and about 200 to 300 members of Eichmann's *Sonderkommando* also arrived to Hungary. Extreme right-wing political organizations, including naturally the Volksbund, the Eastern Front-Line Alliance of Brother-In-Arms (*Keleti Arcvonal Bajtársi Szövetség*) founded only a few weeks before under Imrédy's leadership, and the pro-Nazi groups of the Ministry of Home Affairs led by Péter Hain, began to activize. Several hundreds of members of the left-wing opposition parties (the Social Democratic Party, the Independent Smallholders Party and the Bourgeois Freedom Party) were arrested, including Károly Peyer, Illés Mónus, Géza Malasits, Sándor Millok, Manó Buchinger, Ferenc Nagy, instead of Zoltán Tildy his son, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky (the only detainee opposing by arms), Károly Rassay and others. A number of bourgeois journalists, writers and scholars were seized. Even the leaders of the pro-Western groups of the ruling classes could not avoid arrest. 28 MPs and Upper House members fell in Germans hands. After the session of the Privy Council held in the afternoon of 19th March after the "resignation" of the Kállay government, the Gestapo caught Minister of Home Affairs Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer and his right-hand man, Political Department Chief József Sombor-Schweinitzer, together with several other high-ranking foreign affairs officials and officers. Kállay escaped to the Turkish embassy through the labyrinths under the Palace. Even Nazi sources estimated the number of people caught in the capital at more than three thousand.

Simultaneously with the arrests, the Gestapo seized and at most places devastated the headquarters of the left-wing parties, several trade union homes, the premises of various social organizations including those of the Peasant League and the editorial offices of such left-wing newspapers as *Népszava* and *Magyar Nemzet*. They confiscated the Budapest hotels, a number of villas on Rose Hill and all the schools in Budapest. The behaviour of the occupying German soldiers was a surprise even for the Hungarian gendarme and police authorities sympathizing with them, as reflected by the police and gendarme reports on the "arbitrary actions" and "disorder" of the German soldiers. Police reports from Baja, Kalocsa, Kaposvár, Kassa and later from Karcag, Nagybánya, Kolozsvár and Beregszász urged to take action against the abuses of the Nazi authorities.

The most tragic event of the days following the occupation was the cruel crushing of a communist revolt at the Sátoraljaújhely prison where some 400 Hungarian, Serbian, Slovak and Romanian communists were held in the jail of the General Staff. A group of communist prisoners had been working for a long time on a plan of sortie. The idea was to get in touch with the Slovak partisans and join them. After the German occupation, although the conditions for the success of this plan were not realistic, the majority of the communist leaders in prison were of the opinion that there was no more time to lose: the sortie should be carried out before the

German occupation of the town, because after that the whole plan would be hopeless. Despite the uncertainty of the action's success, the majority of the communists decided in favour of it and the others accepted the decision.

On March 22, at a given sign the internal guards were disarmed and a group of communist prisoners escaped to Sátorhegy through the prison gate. The rest of the guards, however, opened fire at those inside the building and the German troops reaching the town that day together with the local gendarmerie set out in pursuit of those escaping to the mountains. The unarmed prisoners were soon forced to succumb. The Nazis killed 54 communists. The hastily convened summary court sentenced another 11 communists to death and they were executed.

The whole country was staggered by the German occupation. Even Bálint Hóman, a loyal follower of the Nazis, former Minister of Education, could not conceal his aversion. The following lines occur in his diary notes: "Public opinion responded to the march in of the 'allied' forces, the occupation and the arbitrary activities of the German authorities, with utmost shock and pain, some with anger, others with shame." As a result of the Nazis' step and Horthy's submission, there was some kind of polarization in the middle classes and even in the ruling classes. Some refused to cooperate with the German occupiers, others passively accepted the facts, but still there were many who were ready to meet the Nazi demands and orders. The bigger part of the Horthyist leading circles, together with the Governor, were enlisted in the occupiers' service.

After some delay, Horthy appointed Döme Sztójay, formerly Ambassador to Berlin, Prime Minister. The key positions of the Cabinet were shared by the Government Party, the Party of Hungarian Life (weakened significantly after the Nazi intervention), and the strengthened Imrédy-clan, the Party of Hungarian Revival. The national socialist parties were represented in the government by two of their prominent members, László Baký and László Endre.

In accordance with the Nazi plans, the Sztójay government set out to turn Hungarian political life and state machinery totally fascist. First of all the bourgeois parties and the SDP—already destroyed and deprived of their leaders—were officially banned. Then a number of left-wing and liberal social organizations, first of all the Hungarian Peasant League, were dissolved. *Népszava*, *Magyar Nemzet*, *Szabad Szó*, *Független Magyarország* and *Mai Nap* and a few weeks later the trade union newspapers, too, altogether 126 papers, were "legally" suppressed. Both libraries and individuals were compelled to deliver books by the authors under prohibition—more than two hundred progressive Hungarian and foreign authors.

State administration was "reorganized" at a rapid pace and the state machinery was purged. The supporters of the "see-saw policy" were removed from the Ministries of Foreign and Home Affairs. By the end of May, 29 of the 41 lord lieutenants were replaced. Budapest's chief city major, mayor and chief of police were also replaced, and similar reshuffles took place in other towns as well. The National Confederation of Industrialists won a new president and lost its autonomy. Later its name, too, was changed to National Centre of Industrialists. The National Centre of Industrial Bodies met with a similar fate. The leaderships of

the National Bank, the Credit Bank, the Opera House, the National Theatre and the Radio were dismissed and the government's semi-official German newspaper, the *Pester Lloyd* got a new editor-in-chief.

The first anti-Semitic rules starting a whole wave of anti-Jewish measures were made at the session of the Cabinet on March 29, 1944. First they ordered the Jews to pin up the yellow star, then confiscated their vehicles, telephones and radios and removed them from public offices and deprived them of membership in the Bar, press, doctors' and actors' chambers. Later their freedom of movement, too, was limited; "Jewish property" was confiscated. Jewish shops were closed, their stocks sequestered. Moreover, a typical manifestation of fascist inhumanity, their food ration was also limited. With the exception of the capital, from mid-April on, the persecuted were gathered in camps and ghettos everywhere. After May 15, tens of thousands of people were transported to the Auschwitz death camp every day. 70 to 75 people were crushed into each locked cattle-truck. By July 9, (as Veessenmayer's report put it) when the "freeing of the countryside of the Jews" had ended, four and a half hundred thousands of people were taken away in all. At a rough estimate, more than 320 000 died in the gas chambers, half of them women, one fifth infants.

The government feared the workers' opposition and eventual disorder, and therefore it did not dissolve the trade unions, trusting in the loyal attitude of trade union leaders intimidated by terror; they were only placed under the control of government commissioners. However, the workers' homes of the trade unions were seized everywhere. In Budapest, for example, the ironworkers' headquarters and the workers' homes at Angyalföld, Kőbánya, Rákospalota, Csepel, Kispest and Pestszentimre were all closed down. Those in the countryside met with a similar fate.

On March 26, with the mediation of Christian socialist Lajos Vasváry appointed State Secretary for Workers' Affairs and with the consent of Veessenmayer, Sztójay called on those TUC leaders who were still at liberty to start negotiations. The representatives of the government and the TUC discussed matters for several days. The latter were led by Lajos Kabók appointed General Secretary in Charge when Károly Peyer was arrested. As a start, Vasváry accepted the conditions of the Trade Union Council—the permission for the trade unions to operate "normally" and the release of their arrested leaders. However, the days after the talks showed that the willingness of the TUC to cooperate with the Hungarian Quisling government entailed commitments for the unions only, despite the government's promises. Legality, promised and even confirmed by the government, was used only to mislead the workers, and the series of promises (never meant to be kept) that went with them served only to force the organized workers to carry on with industrial production and refrain from "disturbing" actions.

The organs of the Ministry of Home Affairs which, for many years, had demanded the banning of the workers' organizations now found it incomprehensible to permit trade union activity. After the banning of the SDP, they caught those functionaries who had escaped the first wave of arrests one after the other. That is how the whole leadership of the Hungarian Construction Workers' Union,

headed by Miklós Somogyi, were carried off, together with György Marosán, General Secretary of the Food Workers' Union, József Kőműves, Vice President of the Clothing Workers' Union and other worker-leaders of the capital. In early April, several trade union leaders, members of the SDP, the Peasant League and other progressive organizations, were also arrested or interned in the countryside. On the 5th of April, the chairman of the SDP's Debrecen organization was interned; Sándor Rónai, the secretary of the party's Miskolc organization together with more than ten other leaders met with the same fate. On the 13th of April, the secretary of the SDP and twenty other people (ten of them local trade union leaders) were carried off from Kassa. In the month following the country's occupation, 113 communists or suspected communists were interned, and another 54 were placed under police supervision in the territory of Ungvár police headquarters. The number of the interned was 85 at Máramarossziget and 77 at Csíkszereda. We know about the internment of 19 local socialist leaders at Baja. Local social democratic and trade union leaders were carried off in dozens from Orosháza, Hódmezővásárhely, Békéscsaba, Kolozsvár, Nagyvárad, Rozsnyó, Eger, Vác, Székesfehérvár, Pápa and Pécs. At end-April, police reports noted laconically that "elements suspected of being communists have partly been interned, partly placed under police supervision". According to rough estimates based on internment orders, recollections and the minutes of the Trade Union Council from 1944, the number of the arrested or interned SDP and trade union officials, including many communists, was close to one thousand. There are not even rough estimates as to the number of those organized and social democratic workers, agricultural labourers and other anti-fascist people who got arrested.

Terror against the anti-fascists and the "solution of the Jewish problem" was only one of the methods of intimidating the Hungarian people. After the occupation, the huge propaganda machinery, falling into the hands of the extreme right wing, intensified its anti-communist and anti-Soviet slanders, and increased nationalistic, chauvinistic and anti-Semitic incitement. The country was overflowed by the dirty deluge of alarming rumours.

Those dailies that still appeared and "public" statements, too, reiterated the ideas of "show-down" and the eradication of bolshevism. Mass rallies of Imrédy's followers and of the Arrow-Cross men, the inaugurations of lord lieutenants and the activities of the Eastern Front-Line Alliance of Brother-in-Arms whose slogan was "Victory or death!"—as well as those of the Anti-Bolshevik Youth Camp founded in early April, were carried out in the spirit of an unrestrained anti-bolshevik and anti-Jewish campaign.

The government did not select in its methods to shamelessly misinform the masses. For example, the wealth of the dissolved parties and social organizations had to be paid to the cheque of the National Association of Disabled Servicemen and the War Orphans' Foundation. This money was apparently used for noble purposes; the charity, however, never reached the orphans. A similar propaganda campaign was launched when the food rations of the Jews were reduced and when they were prohibited to sell on the markets. Newspaper headlines boasted that, after

the anti-Jewish measures, food supplies improved significantly and black marketeering was curbed. For several months, the village poor and workers of the war factories wearing worn out clothes were lured with the promise of the distribution of the sequestered wealth of the Jews, mainly that of the textile and shoe wholesale stocks.

Thousands of pro-fascist craftsmen and others seeking the sympathy of the extreme right wing scrambled for getting hold of the closed Jewish shops. There are innumerable denouncing and slandering letters whose writers wanted to gain distinction in this way, by getting hold of the property of the Jews or the sympathizers. So much so that on June 10, the Finance Minister was compelled to submit a special report to the meeting of the Cabinet "On cases of illicit use of Jewish property to be inventorized". It was clear from the report that before and during closure, not only individuals but official organs, too, appropriated Jewish property at many places. The gendarmerie "retained" personal property for themselves. Members of the *Vitézi Rend* (ex-servicemen) claimed and were given plots, primarily vineyards. According to the report, wide-scale actions were launched to expropriate Jewish property classified as national wealth. There was an especially large-scale looting in unguarded Jewish buildings and abandoned ghettos. Pro-Nazi Minister Reményi-Schneller admitted himself that the Germans were in the forefront of looting everywhere. A typical example was when Waffen SS seized Baron Hatvany-Deutsch's castle and took away immense valuables. The fascist propaganda machinery did not recoil from even the most inhumane propaganda in order to incite emotions in the masses and to get the Jews of Budapest to a similar fate as those in the country, crammed in ghettos. For example, the newspaper *Függetlenség* calculated that billeting together 200 000 Jews in Pest would free 28 000 homes for families living in bad conditions or houses that suffered bomb attacks.

The question arises why—in the last phase of the war, on the threshold of the defeat of Nazism—anti-Semitism could influence so great masses of people and how it was possible that a very significant part of the population was actively involved in carrying out the anti-Jewish measures.

The roots of anti-Semitism in Hungary go back to the period when Hungarian imperialism was taking shape. From then on, reactionary forces of the country had propagated anti-Semitism systematically and with increasing energy in order to mislead the masses fighting for the improvement of their social position, and to counterbalance the ever-increasing social conflicts. The lower strata of the ruling classes, the gentry, and the "middle strata" showing many similarities with them, expected the realization of their political, social and economic aspirations from the settlement of the "racial" issue. Anti-Semitism became a characteristic ideological weapon in the hand of the fascist system which came to power and strengthened after the defeat of the Hungarian Republic of Council. Still it did not prevent the close cooperation of the dualist and later the Horthy regime, and the Jewish big capitalists and their mutual reliance on each other.

In the 1920s and the 1930s, the anti-capitalist sentiments of backward workers, the land-hunger of the poor peasants, the increasing discontent of craftsmen and shopkeepers, unemployed Christian officers and intellectuals were all channeled so as to induce anti-Semitism; minor advantages granted to a certain fraction of these groups at the time of the Anti-Jewish Laws led to their corruption and they were driven to a blind alley. The strata living among rapidly deteriorating social circumstances in the fourth year of the war, imbued with anti-Semitism and evermore indifferent to humanism, expected that the occupation will bring about the amelioration of their living conditions.

Mention should also be made of the hysterical press campaign launched in the wake of the bomb attacks. Hardly two weeks after the occupation, on the 3rd of April, Budapest (especially Csepel and Pesterzsébet) were heavily bombed by British and American aircraft; many were killed. From that time on, bombing attacks became regular and spread to rural industrial areas and railway junctions as well. The attack on April 13th against the Győr Wagon Factory was one of the most serious ones. The attacks themselves gave rise to panic, despair and passionate outbursts among the general public. The press and the radio tried to make the most of this atmosphere. They published articles and statements of a dramatic tone and carried shocking photos, completely forgetting their earlier attitude by which they considered the bomb attacks against English cities or the cruel destruction of Soviet land something natural and allowable. The dramatic propaganda campaigns were necessary, among other things, because it turned out soon that the citizens of the Hungarian towns and the workers of the factories were completely defenceless: anti-aircraft defence was practically non-existent; the factories had no bomb-proof refuge and the government did not prepare for aerial warfare.

After the first air raids, complete confusion prevailed in official circles. The government's first measure was to organize the escape of the masses from the capital, the evacuation of non-working citizens from Budapest, especially from the outskirts. According to some reports, nearly one hundred thousand people had been evacuated by the end of April.

While fascist terror raged in the country, further hundreds of thousands of servicemen left for the Eastern Front to fill the gap cut in the front by the Red Army.

On March 23rd, the order of the Kállay government prohibiting the deployment of Hungarian occupation forces on the front, was repealed. Divisions mobilized in February crossed the Carpathian mountain in early April, and then new and new divisions arrived to Galicia to be organized there into the 1st Hungarian Army. In the meantime, the corps of generals and officers were "purged" on the front, too. Even Chief of Staff Ferenc Szombathelyi did not prove reliable enough; he was replaced by Colonel-General János Vörös. The deployed 1st Hungarian Army was 250 000-strong; while the number of troops outside the formation of the army was around 70 000.

However, both the political and moral level of the army was significantly lower than that of the 2nd Hungarian Army sent to the front in 1943. This was indicated by reports of Hungarian communists doing front propaganda work on the side of

the Red Army. These reports informed about the atmosphere, and the opinion of the four to four and a half thousand Hungarian soldiers who were taken prisoners in April, and who went over later individually or in groups as well as about the reasons of the latter's desertion. "Hungarian soldiers are most annoyed, Ernő Gerő wrote to Mátyás Rákosi in a letter dated May 6th, by the fact that the Germans came to Hungary and they were sent to the front in the meantime. The general atmosphere among the servicemen is anti-German, but not in an active way. A part of the officers, mainly the reservists, are also dissatisfied with the Germans. . . There is no general disorder, though many came over out of their own will and many Hungarian soldiers surrender." Some weeks later reports informed of an increasing disorder. Gerő and the others reported a growing number of terror measures in the army. German units were mixed with Hungarian ones so that each Hungarian division was surrounded from both sides by German ones followed by German tank troops in the back.

This poorly equipped, indifferent and morally weak army was attacked by the Red Army in mid-July. It took only a few days for the Soviet troops to break through the front line defended by the Hungarians and destroy the 1st Hungarian Army. During the battles, tens of thousands of Hungarian soldiers, one hundred officers among them, fell into Soviet captivity. In a detailed letter to Rákosi dated August 6th, and discussing the events of the two-week-long fight and the morale of the Hungarian troops, one can read: "The First Hungarian Army is today a defeated and disabled army! German officers drive back the defeated and dispersed Hungarian troops by light machine guns. On countless occasions, German officers killed the retreating Hungarian soldiers in dozens on the spot." Another letter written a few days later related the inferences drawn from the conversations of POWs: "There is such an anti-German hatred among the servicemen and officers, that no serious battle could be waged with this ruined army." And, indeed, the General Staff was compelled to withdraw the army to the Carpathians.

The German occupation not only claimed further victims, but provoked a rapid deterioration of the country's economic situation and an organized ransacking of Hungary, that is, it also meant economic disaster.

The Nazis wanted to ease the economic problems of their continuously diminishing *Lebensraum* at Hungary's expense. Therefore, they described "the unlimited use of Hungary's economic potential" as one of the most urgent tasks. On June 2, 1944 an economic agreement was signed, according to which Hungary undertook to cover not only the costs of the occupation but even the financing of all German expenses in Hungary as well as that of the German orders and Hungarian transportations. Besides these, "internal" military expenditure, too, was increased significantly. The new burdens of the country in this period reached almost 50% of the national income (18% of which served the financing of German debts).

The Nazis managed to fit Hungary politically, economically and militarily into the dangerously diminishing German *Lebensraum*. However, due to the specific form of the occupation, these qualitative changes mainly remained hidden. The pseudo-realization of occupational functions put up a significant bar obstructing the active

manifestations of growing anti-German feelings, the rapid development of anti-fascist resistance comprehending the whole Hungarian society.

The fact that Horthy was ready to maintain legal continuity by remaining on his post; after a short period of hesitation, the Hungarian army continued fighting as a German ally against the Soviet Union; that the old Horthyist state machinery—apart from changes in the top leadership—went on operating, especially in the countryside, made it possible for the Germans to carry out terror, deportation and the total mobilization of the national economy by using the Hungarian state administration. *In other words, the German occupiers could, in some sense, stay in the background.* The fact that Horthy remained on his post, not only helped the realization of Nazi plans, but created harmful illusions in the ruling classes and other strata of society that the Governor and *the anti-Nazi and at the same time anti-popular groups* around him could, at the right moment, lead the country out of the horrors of war.

After the German occupation, it became obviously more difficult to organize the resistance movement. As a consequence of the destruction of the left-wing parties, the Peace Party remained the only organized political force around which the anti-fascist and anti-Nazi forces could rally. It was the only party which—due to its underground position exactly—could largely maintain its organizations and efficiency. The arrests did not hit it so badly as the other parties, but the fact that it exerted its activities and influence mainly through legal organizations, had a heavy effect. The dissolution of the SDP, the Peasant League, and especially its Navvies' Section, and the severe limits imposed on trade union activity deprived the communists of the media through which the results of their work manifested themselves.

The Central Committee of the Peace Party, led by János Kádár, and consisting, at that time, of Ferenc Donáth, Márton Horváth, László Orbán and Gábor Péter, discussed and elaborated the tasks dictated by the changed situation in the days following the occupation. First of all, they issued an appeal to the Hungarian people, stating that "*The Germans have occupied our country!*" This was necessary to dissolve the false rumour about the Nazi move saying that there had been no change in the *status quo*. Hitler and his company "want to prolong their lost war at the expense of our destruction". In this situation, the leaflet said, the ransacking of the country, the death of hundreds of thousands and our country being turned into a battlefield can only be prevented by the independence war of a unified nation. The banner of national resistance is to be lifted high! The communists called—first individually, and later jointly as well—on all the classes and strata of the Hungarian society to fight: "Workers, peasants, soldiers, citizens, students! Organize national resistance, form groups of struggle! In factories, mines, workshops, offices and houses; at universities, barracks, guard posts, villages and hamlets; two, three, ten of you, unite! . . . Let the German occupiers in our homeland have neither day nor night! . . . *Destroy them with fire and iron!*"

According to police reports, this appeal had reached many factories, regions and even villages in the backwoods. It was a call to fight; a word of encouragement and

guidance for the anti-fascist forces, bereft and bewildered, bringing comfort and hope for the future as well.

From this time on, the role of Radio Kossuth and Radio Petőfi (the latter broadcasting from England) significantly increased. After the anti-fascist parties and organizations had ceased to exist, and due to the weakness of the underground network, in the towns, and especially in the countryside, the two radio stations were the advisors and the only source of information of the anti-fascists. Albeit, at that time, many simple people had no radio and, moreover, the German and the Hungarian oppressive organs confiscated many sets and threatened with serious punishment those who listened in to "hostile" foreign broadcasts and spread their news.

The two radio stations broadcast dramatic calls to the Hungarian people the day after the occupation. Radio Kossuth called on all Hungarian patriots of any parties, right or left, to establish committees of national resistance and to launch armed struggle. It urged to begin partisan struggle. "What we have to do is launch a partisan fight all over the country! Partisan centres are to be established in the Buda Hills, in the Carpathians, the Bácska, the Mecsek and the Mátra mountains, the Bihar mountains, the woods of the Bakony and the acacia areas between the rivers Danube and Tisza. Each factory, each mine, each village is to be stronghold of armed resistance."

Both the Central Committee of the Peace Party and the Hungarian communists living in the Soviet Union were of the opinion that the conditions of anti-German actions, armed struggle, too, if possible, should be created gradually. Therefore, they planned to establish a military committee annexed to the Central Committee and to organize armed groups. Their plans included the establishment of contacts with the resistance organizations of the neighbouring countries, first of all with the partisan movement in Yugoslavia. They considered Yugoslavia important not only because of its mass partisan movement, but also because they knew that there were regular contacts, an air-lift, between the Yugoslav General headquarters and the Soviet Union. The leaders of the Peace Party expected to set up direct links with the Hungarian communist leaders working in the Soviet Union and to coordinate their activity through this channel. They expected support and aid from the Yugoslav partisans to start the Hungarian partisan movement. Central Committee leader János Kádár undertook this difficult commission. He set out in mid-April together with his Yugoslav contact but both were caught at the river Dráva and arrested as deserters.

The Central Committee of the party used all the forces and instruments at its disposal to help those in trouble; the pursued, the fugitives. They prepared false papers and furnished underground flats. Communists also helped the leaders and party functionaries of the crushed parties to set up underground organizations.

Communist leaders urged the establishment of a unity front of national forces above all. Evaluating the situation, they stated that the occupation was a severe blow, but provided great opportunities to gain those petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces that could be reckoned with in the anti-Nazi struggle and gained for the cause

of national resistance. The Central Committee decided to urge, in concert with the policy formulated at the beginning of the war, the setting up of a broad organization acceptable for anti-Nazi bourgeois forces as well. Later, at the talks held with its partners, the Central Committee proposed to adopt the name *Hungarian Front*.

From the point of view of establishing the national front, it was decisive how the Social Democratic Party, forced underground, would react, and what the still free trade union leaders, placed under the control of government commissioners, would do. In the first days, the unexpected German occupation, the lack of preparation and perplexity caused serious confusion. The question then was whether the leaders of the socialist workers' organization, and especially the free right-wing leaders, would be capable of drawing the conclusions of their policy of wait and see; whether they would be ready to mobilize the hundreds of thousands of organized workers, or else continued their former policy.

The German occupation, the arrests and the complete defencelessness of the first days was a shock even for right-wing social democrats. Their leader, Károly Peyer, was carried off by the Gestapo. Most left-wing leaders and the majority of medium-level leaders who had shown more than once before that they supported consistent struggle inclined towards resistance and underground organization this time, too. They hoped that the right-wing leaders would also join them, or at least give their support. But it turned out that, although each of the right-wing leaders condemned the occupation, only an insignificant minority was ready to resist and join the underground movement. The majority adopted a wait-and-see position or passivity. Defying the danger of being arrested, the organized workers and local leaders continued to go to their organizations to receive advice and guidance. Many of them expected underground activity and organized resistance to begin and they wanted definite guidance. A staff member of *Népszava*, Dezső Faraghó wrote in his memoirs that during the occupation and for some days after it, many office-holders and members of the SDP were walking in the streets near the headquarters of the trade unions in order to learn what to do. Some 25 functionaries gathered in the party organization of the printers' house, and they decided in favour of the underground movement. On 20 and 21 March, Faraghó discussed the matter at the headquarters of the ironworkers with Lajos Kabók and Sándor Karácsony. He asked for their support and agreement. The leaders of the Trade Union Council did not oppose the idea, but did not support it either. Dezső Faraghó also wrote that the chief union stewards of the factories and the leaders of the various unions met the leaders of the Trade Union Council every day (until circumstances allowed it), and reported on the events and expected advice from the leaders. But "neither Kabók, nor the chief union stewards made any proposal to prepare organizing the resistance". Owing to the arrests and persecutions, less and less people could come together, and even that was ever more difficult. The viewpoint of the leaders was unchanged: "Just wait; wait and see what happens". And, in the meantime, leaders gathering on trade union premises were arrested by the dozen, including a 25-member group in the printers' home.

At the end of March, the TUC leadership, still at large, assumed that their policy of wait and see was correct; they were justified by the events, as opposed to the "hot-headed and inconsiderate" left-wingers. When talks were started with the Sztójay government and the trade unions were promised legality, the Council was authorized, on the basis of Lajos Kabók's report by the committee of the Federation of Hungarian Workers' Unions meeting on 30 March, to assure the government of the loyalty of the organized workers if it accepted the conditions outlined earlier. Since the government met, or at least promised to meet, some of the Trade Union Council's demands, right-wing union leaders gave up the idea of underground organization and organized resistance once and for all.

After the occupation, former SDP General Secretary Ferenc Szeder found shelter at one of his socialist friends' place at Kistarcsa. He, too, rejected the idea of resistance, and underground organization by the party. Overcoming the shock of the first days, he asked Bishop László Ravasz of the Reformed Church in a letter to intercede with the government for himself and his persecuted and arrested socialist colleagues. In the letter he spoke out for the persecuted and arrested socialists, but at the same time offered himself for the government, giving up all kind of resistance. Szeder wrote that the banning of the party and the regulations against its leaders were incomprehensible for him, since, "during our activities, we have always considered the country's state of war—despite the fact that we disagreed with this war—, and we did not make a single step which would have an adverse effect on warfare, or the country's interests". During the war, the SDP was "the guard of order, calm and discipline", something that "would be of vital necessity in the forthcoming grave, perhaps tragic, period for the Hungarians". Later he added "and for warfare". Anna Kéthly, who went underground after the occupation refused to support either the government or resistance, and chose complete political passivity instead.

Contrarily to the right-wing social democratic leaders, the left-wingers (including Imre Molnár, Lajos Egger, Sándor Moldvai, Ferenc Szabó Jr and Sr, Pál Schiffer, István Szász, Géza Keszthelyi and many others), who had rallied around Árpád Szakasits (himself in close contact with the communists up to the beginning of the war) set out to seek connections with the communists and the Peace Party at once after the shock of the first days. Through mediators, the Central Committee of the Peace Party came into contact with Árpád Szakasits at the end of March. Already during the first discussion, the communists proposed contacts, mutual help and closer cooperation between the leaders of the two parties, and, in addition, the setting up of a struggle organization rallying all anti-Nazi forces. They sent the draft appeal and program of the planned anti-fascist front to Árpád Szakasits. He and the left-wingers around him accepted the proposal of the communists as to the setting up of the Hungarian Front and agreed with the draft appeal. They undertook to make efforts through their contacts to gain over trade union leaders and establish relations with the leaders of parties and organizations forced underground.

Despite the first statements by right-wing leaders, Pál Schiffer visited Lajos Kabók and Sándor Karácsony in early April, and then had talks with all the union leaders whom he could reach. At these talks he informed them about the agreement between the Peace Party and the left-wing social democrats, the planned appeal of the Hungarian Front and called on them to join. Some of them (József Büchler, Péter Bechtler, Rezső Radvánszky and Miklós Vas-Witteg, among others) agreed with the idea of setting up a common front and were inclined to give it a certain support and enter into cooperation, but only to an extent which would not hinder the trade unions' legal activities. But Lajos Kabók and Sándor Karácsony, as well as the majority of the leaders, refused to join. They considered every underground organization, including both the planned Hungarian Front and the underground reorganization of the SDP, harmful and dangerous for the trade unions' legal activities. Ferenc Szeder responded in a similar manner to Imre Molnár's proposal. Pál Schiffer wrote in his memoirs about the discussion with the trade union leaders that the majority of the union leaders did not understand, or if they did, then did not want to accept that the readiness of the Germans and the government to talk, and the legality of the unions served the same goal: "to secure the continuity of production". Trade union leaders cherished the illusion that "they can preserve the unions for later times... For the war would soon end and if they manoeuvre cleverly enough, they can preserve the trade unions intact". They rejected the charge of providing support for the Nazi war machinery, saying that "production would continue even without them", and their call is only part of the tactics serving the protection of the unions and their membership.

The attitude of the leaders of the Trade Union Council, primarily that of Lajos Kabók, was an organic follow-up of pre-occupation Peyer policy. Even if one accepts the arguments that they wanted to save and preserve the trade unions and union property and not Nazi war production, it cannot be left unsaid that, objectively, their behaviour served the Nazi war efforts and meant a turning away from the interests of the working class and the whole nation as well as from the national and international struggle of the anti-fascist forces. This was crowned by their individual tragedies for, in the last analysis, they could neither save the trade unions, nor themselves, for Kabók, Karácsony, Mónus and others became victims of their legality policy.

After the occupation, intimidated organized workers left the unions for fear of political consequences, while a smaller group resigned because of the Trade Union Council's support for Sztójay. However, the bulk of organized workers accepted the arguments of their leaders. They feared for their organization, trusted in surviving the war and, as a consequence, continued working at the assembly line, abstaining themselves from all political activity which could adversely influence the "interests of warfare".

In early April, the Peace Party issued a leaflet addressed to the organized workers to mobilize them to fight and counterbalance the opportunist policy of the trade union leaders. It called on the workers to defend their organizations instead of abandoning them; to turn them into bases of resistance; to establish underground

factory and trade union organizations and strikes, leave the war factories and paralyze transport. "*Organize and support the underground movement, the struggle for independence against the Germans. Be in the forefront of national resistance!*"

The appeal of the Peace Party to the navvies called on the peoples of the villages to set up local organizations of resistance and join "the front of our war of independence embracing the whole nation". It called on them to refuse the ingathering of crops and also the taxes, and to hide freedom-fighters.

Despite the trade union leaders' negative response, left-wing social democrats insisted on the plan of the Hungarian Front, offered their help and even tried to form underground SDP organizations of their party. This absolutely unknown task meant brave and difficult work for them. As a first step, illegal groups were established in the 2nd, 5th, 6th, 7th and 13th districts of Budapest. They started to organize the underground "R" guard which later played an important role in guarding meetings, especially those of the Hungarian Front. The organization was directed by Árpád Szakasits, Pál Schiffer, István Száva, Lajos Egger and others.

There was yet another line of underground activity. It was led by young SDP secretary, Antal Bán. They were joined by György Marosán, Imre Szélig and Pál Justus. But in mid-April, when trade union leaders refused to cooperate with the underground movement and György Marosán was arrested again, the members of the group gave up further underground activities.

Setting up the SDP's underground network proceeded with difficulties because of the hesitation, lack of experience, and fear of—mainly older—socialist office-holders caused by the arrests (e.g. that of Pál Schiffer). Still, the underground network taking shape had an important role in hiding people, obtaining illegal papers and information, getting them to people who needed them and especially in distributing leaflets.

At the same time of the talks with the Peace Party, the left wing of the SDP and the trade unions had already been seeking contacts with representatives of the dissolved bourgeois parties. The bourgeois wing of the anti-Hitlerite forces was also severely hit by the country's occupation. The majority of the leaders were either arrested or persecuted. Their political program, based on a Kállay-type "see-saw policy", suffered serious defeat. Both the plan of coalition based on the alliance of the Smallholders Party and the SDP, without the communists, after the war, and the plan of the Democratic Bourgeois Block developing in early Spring 1944 which considered not only the communists but also the SDP to be unsuitable as a coalition partner, failed after March 1944. In the weeks after the occupation, the attitude of the still free members of the bourgeois wing was characterized by waiting. This was the situation when the communists and socialists working on the establishment of the Hungarian Front appeared on the scene. The agreement between the Peace Party and the left wing of the Social Democratic Party made joining the national front easier for some of the representatives of the crushed bourgeois parties and organizations.

The Peace Party contacted Gyula Dessewffy, leader of the Smallholders Party and editor-in-chief of *Kis Újság*, and then Zoltán Pfeiffer, too. Dessewffy put the

communists in touch with Marquis György Pallavicini, a well-known leader of the legitimists. With the mediation of smallholder journalists, the social democrats contacted Zoltán Tildy hiding in the countryside. Contacts spread rapidly. The common fate of the defenceless people in trouble, the growing hatred of the Germans, the desire to act and the anti-Jewish measures that also violated Christian humanism, drove various bourgeois persons, and even representatives of the Christian Churches (Bishop Albert Bereczky included) into the camp of national resistance. According to some sources, Catholic youth organizations were also represented in the national front. Later, a link was established with the police, the municipal corporation of the capital and even high-ranking military personalities. Left-wing anti-fascists tried to contact representatives of the National Peasant Party, but they were hiding in the country, so it was impossible to ask for their opinion and invite them to join. They visited smallholder Béla Kovács, General Secretary of the Hungarian Peasant League in his Pécs home. But Kovács refused to cooperate with the communists and also to join the Hungarian Front both on his league's and his party's behalf.

By the middle of May 1944, when the Central Committee of the Peace Party already had the consent of the SDP, the Smallholders Party, the legitimist Double Cross Federation and the above-mentioned representatives of the Christian Churches for the establishment of the Hungarian Front, a foundation session was held. At the discussion in the villa of Pallavicini, Árpád Szakasits, Dessewffy, Pallavicini and György Markos, representing the Peace Party, were present. The participants accepted the appeal of the Hungarian Front. As a matter of fact, from the second half of May 1944, the Hungarian Front can be considered an established organ. No exact date is available. The population of the country learnt about what had happened in the early days of June from the appeal signed by the above-mentioned parties printed in tens of thousands of copies.

The introductory part of the appeal pointed in a dramatic tone to the shameful fact of German occupation, a direct consequence of the policy of high treason pursued by "the counter-revolutionary reactionary forces for 25 years . . . Our lives and freedom, the life of our nation, and the fate of future Hungarian generations . . . are at stake." In this situation the nation had no other choice but to fight, a fact clearly recognized by the democratic parties forced underground and united in the Hungarian Front. Aware of their historic responsibility, they proclaimed "a new war of independence, a new people's war". The program of the Front was summed up in the following: "to expel the German occupiers and their accomplices; to secure peace with the allies, and lay the foundations of a fully democratic and free Hungary".

It is clear from the appeal that the parties of the Hungarian Front thought that the international circumstances favoured their struggle. The call of the three allied powers, that is, the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States, on May 13 to the Nazi satellites was a serious warning, but also meant support. The hour to decide has come—the great powers said. If Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Finland now broke with the Nazis, they could still contribute to the victory of the Allied

Powers. This call was issued at a time when the allied forces prepared a major offensive against the Nazi empire both in the East and the West.

The appeal issued by the democratic parties tried to use the above call and the news of the offensive to put pressure on those members of the Hungarian Front who still advocated the wait-and-see tactics and passivity, and also on Horthyist circles, to grasp the last opportunity to break with Hitler. "The Hungarian people is perhaps too weak to carry out this task on its own. But we are not alone. To the north of our borders the Red Army, in the south Tito's people's army are ready to attack. In our struggle the great world coalition of democratic peoples led by America, Britain and the Soviet Union is with us." The document states: "The united attack of the allied forces expected now at any hour makes it possible to oppose the Germans openly and to back out of the war at the beginning of the offensive. Neither Sztójay's handful gang, nor the German occupation can prevent us from doing that." This statement was clearly meant to call attention to possibilities only, since not even the minimal conditions existed for the breakaway.

Refuting the propaganda on "bolshevik threats", the anti-Soviet arguments of cooperation with the Nazis, the appeal states: "The Soviet Union does not endanger our independence, but protects it." In this point of view one can find the germs of a realistic approach to the situation that without the Soviet Union, and especially *against* it, Hungary's future cannot be settled, as opposed to the earlier attitude hoping for Western support only.

After that, the appeal addresses the social strata of the country one by one—the workers, the smallholders and the poor peasants, the bourgeois, the intellectuals and the servicemen. It calls on them to support the persecuted, the deserters; urges production sabotage and to hide the crops. It encourages soldiers "to turn their weapons against the German conquerors and go over to the Red Army". The presence of the representatives of the Churches in the military organizations was indicated by the fact that they made a special call to the priests of the traditional churches, hoping to gain their support as well.

The appeal "To the Hungarian Nation" had hardly left the press when news of the landing of the allied forces in the West, the liberation of Rome and the offensive of the Red Army arrived. The Hungarian Front issued another leaflet to encourage every Hungarian to act, "wherever they stood and whatever they did before". The dramatic tone was meant to rouse the nation. In the hour of decision-making, everybody, including those cooperating with the Germans and those rejecting the struggle, should see that "they are digging the country's, but also their own graves. Everybody is responsible for his deeds before the tribunal of the nation, the same as the nation is responsible for its behaviour before the tribunal of the people".

The establishment of the Hungarian Front was an important fact for which the communists and the leftist leaders of the anti-fascist camp had been struggling for years. This militant organization considered it its main task to mobilize against the Hitlerite occupiers. The appeal, however, only touched upon such important issues of the Communist Party's program as internal social transformation. This was not accidental. On this matter, significant differences of views prevailed between the

parties of the Hungarian Front. To force the solution of this problem at the beginning of the talks would have hindered national unity. But since the break with the Nazis, national independence and internal transformation could not be separated in the long run, and since the masses could not be mobilized without being provided with a clear-cut program urging social transformation, it was reasonable to expect that this latter issue would be of growing importance within the Hungarian Front.

Some weeks later, the paper of the Peace Party, *Béke és Szabadság*, made a clear reference to that. To do away with the Nazis was not the only task: "We have to prevent once and for all that anti-worker reaction should be revived either in the form of fascism or anything else. This can only be guaranteed if our struggle leads not to something of a pretence bourgeois democracy, but to a genuine people's power".

The other major problem of the organization triggering heated debate among the partners from the very outset was the form of the struggle. How was the "new war of independence" to be interpreted? The bourgeois allies, the smallholders and partly the social democrats, too, regarded anti-Nazi propaganda as the central task and felt reluctant to do anything concrete, not to speak of armed actions. Some thought the war would end soon with a favourable outcome for the democratic forces and it would be enough to prepare the nation with propaganda. Others thought that instead of organizing concrete actions, it would be wiser to use their personal contacts to put pressure on the Horthyist circles and wait until Horthy finally made up his mind.

The Peace Party, however, made efforts to involve the national front in every action which would help the evolution of mass-scale anti-German struggle, and encourage the anti-fascists to undertake action and armed struggle. The communists were sure that reluctance would decrease in direct proportion to the success of the action, and the establishment of the organizational network of the resistance movement would speed up.

Even police reports admitted that the establishment of the Hungarian Front and its appeal had a mobilizing effect on anti-Nazi forces which could not have been effected by communist propaganda alone. From the very beginning, it was a centre of attraction and encouragement for rapidly growing basically anti-German underground groups of different aims and strength. It was a medium increasing the communists' opportunity to act and the effectiveness of their struggle. It expanded its activities even to the army totally neglected before. All this had a beneficial influence on the activities of the Hungarian Front. From the beginning of July all the summary reports of the Ministry of Home Affairs agreed that "the movement of the communists and the democratic forces was developing dynamically".

The same was reflected by the response to the Hungarian Front's protest against the persecution of Jews. As a result, various government bodies and ministries urged to take decisive counter-measures. The Hungarian Front's appeal on this matter to the people of the country, to the priests and prelates of the Churches was issued at a time when protests against the Hungarian government's anti-Jewish

measures followed one another abroad, too. The Vatican and the neutral countries protested directly at the Hungarian Foreign Ministry through their embassies; the leaders of the Allied Powers, including President Roosevelt and the King of Great Britain, issued statements of protest and tried to make the Hungarian government "see reason". Foreign pressure, the urging of Christian masses and partly their own bad conscience upon seeing the brutalities forced the leaders of the Hungarian Churches to protest—individually or in groups, sometimes even publicly—against the barbarism afflicted on the Jews. However, owing to government intervention, the planned protest of the Churches received no publicity. Still, they could not prevent the publication of the Hungarian Front's appeal, although they tried to counteract its effect. The appeal definitely increased the influence of the Hungarian Front among the parishioners and priests of the Christian Churches, the Budapest Jews and those who sympathized with them.

During the summer of 1944, the Central Committee of the Peace Party tried to heighten its explanatory and mobilizing propaganda work through the Hungarian Front in the ranks of the army and to build direct contacts in order to involve certain military units into concrete actions. This was facilitated by personal contacts of the bourgeois groups of the Hungarian Front. They decided to set up the military propaganda committee of the Hungarian Front as early as June. The Peace Party appointed György Pálffy its leader. This proved to be a fortunate choice: Pálffy was a trained staff-officer who had left the army in 1939 for political reasons but maintained his contacts with them. He knew the army well and felt at home in organizing military propaganda. He earned great prestige in the civil resistance movement; in 1943 he became a member of the Budapest Executive Committee and the National Board of the Smallholders Party as a member of the Bourgeois Section. His contacts made him especially suitable for the job.

In July 1944 the Hungarian Front's military propaganda machinery started to operate. Members of the committee included Dr Károly Novák, Dr Gyula Décsi and Károly Ravasz. Regular explanatory work was begun to win over the army's servicemen and staff of officers. Regular information bulletines were issued on the political and military situation and the army's tasks in the national resistance movement. The bulletines, issued in several thousand copies, were either distributed as leaflets, or sent in envelopes to those concerned.

The first leaflet addressed specially to the army was published in the second half of July, after the attempt on Hitler's life. It pointed out that even the German staff of generals knew that Hitler had lost the war, that is why they tried to get rid of the Führer. This should have been all the more evident for the Hungarian staff of officers, defenceless against and humiliated by the Nazi Wehrmacht. Some weeks later, with a similar objective in mind, they published a call by Field Marshal Paulus and 17 other generals in Soviet captivity to the German people and army, in which they urged them to end the war at once. Beside assuring a flow of information, the leaflets of Pálffy and his mates determined exactly what the army's anti-German group was to do: "Get in touch immediately, contact with your comrades thinking similarly . . . Prepare plans that suit your local conditions to attack and disarm the

German units in your garrison or in the vicinity . . . Support the fighters of national resistance! Get them arms, ammunition, explosives and uniforms . . . Do not fight in the front line! Go over to the Russians with your units . . ."

The first and only number of the paper *Magyar Front* (Hungarian Front) issued in late July–early August described the attitude of the Hungarian army as the key of defeat or further development. "The Hungarian army is faced with two alternatives"—the editorial of the underground paper wrote—"[Either to] pursue the road followed so far, which leads to devastation and the betrayal of the national interests . . . Or to turn against the German occupiers and drive them out from Hungarian land." This latter step would be the only token of Hungary's independence and of "our entering the community of those fighting for the freedom of peoples".

It is very difficult to assess the mobilizing effect and efficiency of the propaganda work carried out under the well-sounding names of the Peace Party and the Hungarian Front. But there is no doubt as to the secret police' getting very worried indeed about the ever more regular anti-German propaganda spreading to an ever bigger area. They considered most dangerous the leaflet propaganda material flooding the army, first of all the headquarters and some officers in operational areas, and the masses of workers. According to the summary report of the Ministry of Home Affairs in August "the unbirdled propaganda campaign—as I have already reported in my previous summaries—meets with a favourable response in almost every social strata but especially among those masses of workers who are propertyless or live among irregular wage conditions, struggling with financial difficulties, all the more so since the counter-propaganda makes no effort to counteract it with actions; even words are used to a much lesser extent nowadays."

Having established "the battle alliance", the Peace Party concentrated its efforts on shaping its political profile. Therefore, the communists considered it especially important to bring about closer cooperation between the two workers' parties. They repeatedly stressed that the main guarantees for the Hungarian Front to fulfil its historic mission are the strength, organization and political objectives of the working class. Both July issues of *Béke és Szabadság*, analyzing the role and tasks of the working class in the national front, urged the political union of the two parties, knowing that this is the only way for the working class to play its part in eliminating fascism and contribute to the consistent implementation of democratic transformation.

The efforts of the Peace Party's Central Committee were inseparably linked with insisting on the preparation of armed uprising and organizing armed fighting. The communist leaders wanted to make the Hungarian Front *suitable for preparing and leading armed struggle and an armed uprising*. In the decisive phase of the war political struggle had to follow two directions, *Béke és Szabadság* wrote. On the one hand, the influence of the national front should be extended to the whole nation; on the other, the struggle should gradually take sharper forms, that is, "open armed show-down with the Germans . . . *general strike and armed uprising*" should be prepared.

The party of communists had brought up the idea of an armed uprising first in December 1943, as an indirect argument against those bourgeois and petty-bourgeois groups and parties which branded Mihály Károlyi's statement addressed to the Hungarian nation and broadcast by the London Radio in Autumn 1943 an act of incitement for civil war.

The Central Committee of the Peace Party had already considered the alternative that a break with the Nazis and their servants would be possible only by a *national uprising*, but it had not regarded the circumstances ripe for that. In the summer of 1944, the Peace Party was of the opinion that leaving the anti-Soviet war was feasible *only by armed revolt*. However, the communists were well aware of the fact that an uprising was a realistic alternative only if the working class was mobilized successfully, and if the majority of the army and the parties of the national front were also ready to embrace armed revolt. During the summer of 1944, the Peace Party considered the creation of the conditions of an *armed revolt* its primary task, and subordinated everything else to it.

The Peace Party's Central Committee also tried to make a better use of the possibilities inherent in the party. It prepared its underground party groups and factory organizations for starting armed struggle. The communists were seeking the forms allowing the mobilization of the village people and tried to make village organizations also suitable for armed fighting.

The impact of the above efforts was felt already in July 1944. The youth party branches started to transform into action groups. (Endre Ságvári, an outstanding fighter of the communist youth movement, fell while fulfilling his mission in the above task on July 24, 1944, in an exchange of fire with detectives.) Further hand-operated presses were put into operation. There was a search for forms permitting to mobilize the working class within the factories. Underground factory cells tried to win over the civil defence organizations, the fascist factory boards and then the national guards. In order to increase the Hungarian Front's operative capacity, the Peace Party proposed to set up a guiding committee.

Besides the activities of anti-Nazi forces at home, mention should also be made of the work of Hungarian anti-fascists living in emigration, without aiming at giving a full picture. With their protest against the occupation, Hungarians living abroad wanted to document that there existed forces condemning the occupation and fighting against it with their own moderate means.

After March 19, nine ambassadors accredited in countries that still had diplomatic relations with Hungary and another fifty diplomats left their posts in protest against the occupation. The majority tried to find excuses for Horthy and his regime and appealed to the understanding of the anti-fascist allied powers.

The Hungarian Council in England formed in London in April 1944 and led by Mihály Károlyi played a more significant part. It was a federation of anti-fascist Hungarians of various *Weltanschauung* living in England. Its basis included the Hungarian Club formed in the 1920s and still active during the war, the Federation of Free Hungarians in Great-Britain and the Movement for a New Democratic Hungary, but every anti-German, oppositionary group was represented somehow

in the Council, ranging from the communists to Jászi's and Vámbéry's group. A few days after its formation, the Hungarian Council sent an appeal to the people of Hungary and the democratic forces of the world, calling on every Hungarian, irrespective of party differences, to struggle with arms against fascism under the banner of the National Independence Front. It demanded a complete break with the German-oriented foreign policy and proclaimed instead cooperation with the Slavs, the neighbouring countries and the Anglo-Saxon powers. In domestic policy it demanded a complete turn against the past and urged to build a new, progressive Hungary. In its call, the Hungarian Council urged again "the establishment of a united organization of Hungarians living on free soil." The call was sent to anti-fascist groups organizing in Soviet land and on the American continent; its text was reproduced by progressive, Hungarian-language papers issued in the West, by Radio Petöfi broadcasting from London, by western newspapers and radio stations, by the Reuter news service, by BBC, as well as by the Yugoslav partisan radio station and Radio Kossuth. Mihály Károlyi regarded it a central task to create, after miting the organizations in England, a unified organization of all progressive Hungarian movements working abroad under a common program. Although the attempt to create a common organization failed due to the great geographical distances and the differences of the parties concerned, the activities of the different organizations did increase; they came closer to one another and their interest in the events at home grew. Even the governments of the great powers took note of their work. Károlyi succeeded in establishing relations with representatives of the Allied Powers accredited to London. The Hungarian Council launched a well-considered propaganda campaign towards Hungary. Besides the radio and the press, they wanted to increase the effect of propaganda by throwing leaflets from British and American bombers flying over Hungary.

Hungarian anti-fascists living in France founded their common organization, the so-called Hungarian Independence Movement, in August 1943. After Hungary's occupation by Germany, they, too, issued a call to their compatriots, first of all the Hungarians living in France. "Rally in large numbers under the banner of the Independence Movement that has emerged despite Gestapo terror. This group makes it possible for you to help the fight of those at home on French soil..."

The greatest indirect help to the resistance movement at home was given by Hungarian exiles living in the Soviet Union. During the war, Hungarian emigration significantly strengthened both in number and as regards the political means at their disposal. Hungarian communists who had fought in Spain and those who had escaped from the countries occupied by Germans found a second homeland in the Soviet Union. Their work was directed by the Hungarian section of the Comintern led by Mátyás Rákosi. After the dissolution of Comintern, the job was taken over by the Moscow Committee of HPC (better known as Committee Abroad). This group of communists gained undying merits with its propaganda in Radio Kossuth from 1941 on, then with its enlightening work among the Hungarian POWs, and the organization of anti-fascist schools for the POWs.

Those in Moscow established relations with the Hungarian anti-fascist movements working in the western countries and also with Mihály Károlyi. They approved of and waited impatiently for the setting up of a joint anti-fascist front of Hungarians living abroad. A meeting held in Moscow on January 27, 1944, presided by György Nyisztor declared—in accordance with the program of the Hungarian National Independence Front proposed by the Hungarians in Britain and America—that "The meeting is certain that the unified action of Hungarians living abroad, in support of the Hungarian National Independence Front, will give new strength and encouragement for all those who carry on a life-and-death struggle in Hungary against the German fascist barbarians and their Hungarian hirelings."

It has already been mentioned above that, after the German occupation, Radio Kossuth was the first medium through which the Hungarian people were called to struggle. In anti-fascist POW schools, more than 12 000 Hungarian patriots were preparing for the fight. At Obarov a partisan training school was set up under Hungarian leadership; later it was moved to Sviatoshino near Kyev. The school trained some 800 to 900 communists and non-communist patriots who volunteered to take part in the partisan struggle in Hungary and most of them were indeed put into action.

From March 19 on, communists and anti-fascists living in the Soviet Union concentrated their efforts on gaining a better knowledge of the conditions in Hungary, so that their propaganda in Radio Kossuth and among front-line soldiers approximate better the objectives of the anti-fascist forces in Hungary and the anti-Nazi feeling of the Hungarian people. They gained valuable data from soldiers of the 1st Hungarian Army who went over in large numbers or fell in captivity. Most of these servicemen had left the country after the German occupation; their experiences were fresh and reliable. With this in mind, the party's Moscow Committee sent party workers to the front with a double task: they had to inquire about the conditions in Hungary and especially to inform the soldiers on the other side of the front and those who fell into captivity and if possible organize their turn against the Nazis "over there". Front-line propaganda not only played a significant part in winning over the soldiers, but also provided a great many lessons for the exiles, too, freeing them from many false ideas about the circumstances at home rooted in the lack of concrete knowledge.

The experiences thus gained convinced the leaders that both Radio Kossuth and propaganda work on the front should take more seriously the fact that the Hungarian people's readiness to resist did not reach the expected level; that it was rather of a passive than an active nature. The extreme fear of the Soviet Union, the Red Army and, among the soldiers, of captivity, continued to hinder the expansion of resistance. The population, especially the intellectuals (clerks) and the officers had false ideas about Horthy. It was a typical instance of soldier's thinking to believe that if you deserted and returned back home after the war, you would be brought before a military tribunal. The lesson that, in the Carpathians, they were already defending a Hungarian cause and that the "Árpád line" would provide

them security, was deeply rooted in the soldiers' minds. Front-line propagandists wrote that these people were to be freed from such false ideas.

Direct front-line propaganda forwarded a large number of leaflets to the Hungarian trenches. Within three weeks, in April 1944, twelve leaflets were issued in nearly three million copies. The weekly *Képes Front Újság* (Picture Front Paper) was distributed among Hungarian soldiers in 37 000 copies. (*Igaz Szó* (True Word) was issued in much less copies.) The number of broadcasts and the broadcasting time of front radio stations and loud-speakers were increased. An anti-fascist POW school was also established near the front line, so that its attendants could be involved in the front-line propaganda work after some weeks of informative course. Some of the soldiers who had run over were sent back to inform their comrades that the news on captivity were false and to call on them to desert. Marshal Zhukov, the front's Commander-in-Chief sent a personal message to the Hungarian soldiers calling on them to refuse German orders and guaranteeing full support for those who went over.

The results of front-line propaganda were evident in the great number of escapes and mass surrenders in May, and especially after the major defeat in July. On May 16, 34 officers, including a lieutenant-colonel, and 1200 servicemen requested Stalin to make it possible for them to organize Hungarian formations and allow to put them into action. Communists working on the front agreed that there was again a real possibility to organize a Hungarian legion, obstructed during the summer and autumn of 1943 first of all by the veto of Hungarian generals in captivity. Therefore, they urged the party's Moscow Committee to do its utmost to establish a Hungarian legion.

In order to intensify resistance and the self-defence of the Hungarian people, in May 1944 the Moscow Committee decided to declare in the name of the Hungarian National Independence Front under organization abroad that the land and wealth of the traitors "would be confiscated by the nation and distributed to award the freedom fighters". Everybody participating in a partisan unit or in any other form of armed resistance, refusing to obey calling up and leaving the army or running over to the Soviet army or Tito's partisans, would receive an appropriate piece of land as a "national award". One of the first tasks of the national assembly after the liberation was to enact the reward of freedom fighters.

As we have seen, after the occupation the outer and especially the inner anti-fascist forces began to organize resistance from an extremely disadvantageous position. At the beginning, they had practically nothing but propaganda means at their disposal and started their struggle with fascist infection in a very uneven battle. Still, already in the first months, the results of their work clearly showed in the attitude of the Hungarian working class and the working masses.

The behaviour of the various social strata underwent significant—though slow—modification up to the autumn of 1944. This was well evidenced by the bi-weekly situation reports of the Ministry of Home Affairs. In April, they only spoke of intensifying anti-German sentiments. The early-August report already said that "the number of offences against the Governor increases day by day all over the

country, the same as that of the crimes against the state and social order; there were instigations against the armed forces, the constitution, the authorities and their officials, various types of panic-mongering". In late September, when the Soviet troops started to liberate the country, things have gone so far that the report had to admit: "The camp of those wanting peace at all costs has grown to an unbelievable extent in the past two weeks. . . . The average working people, industrial workers and clerks included . . . have become indifferent to any effort of good-will, and what is even more sad, they expect a better fate . . . from Soviet occupation". Another report, written at the same time, stated that "incapability of holding on is a general symptom . . . and the leading circles themselves are considering the idea of a breakaway."

In late Summer 1944, signs of confusion spread to the whole administration, not only to the endangered areas. Miklós Bonczos, taking up his duties as Minister of Home Affairs, severely criticized "the mood of distrust and scepticism" overflowing the whole country. In his opinion, the general feeling was one of coward half-heartedness with which "no state life can exist". Bonczos stated that the slackening permeated the whole administration. Civil servants demanded that the benefits of "social progress" be enjoyed by the masses only. Generosity and a better fulfilment of duty were out of question. The Budapest Police Headquarters also stressed in its August report that "civil servants ask in an intimidated manner whether they are allowed, and whether it is advisable, to do anything against the left wing and the Jews". The meeting of the Cabinet on September 1st discussed a special report on "maintaining order and discipline in the offices as long as possible". They condemned civil servants for refusing to work more than eight hours, and cancelled their week-end rest and summer holidays. They urged to strengthen discipline in this field, too, and called on the leaders to give a good example.

The signs of anarchy did not spare the armed bodies and the army units stationed in the country either. After 19th of March it became clear that the police did not support the occupiers everywhere and in every matter. Both in the Ministry of Home Affairs and at local police headquarters there were people who, after the occupation, sought cooperation with left-wing forces, and occasionally gave advance warning to those concerned about expected arrests, as in Debrecen, Mezőtúr, and elsewhere, too. Moreover, it turned out soon that there was no adequate coordination between the activity of the Nazi security forces and gendarmerie on the one hand, and the police, on the other. As Minister of Home Affairs Andor Jaross stated at the meeting of the Cabinet: "The spirit of the gendarmerie is good; the Germans also speak about it in high terms. That of the police, however, leaves much to be desired." Referring to Horthy's previous approval, Jaross urged the re-organization of the police. The spirit of the police was bad and unsuitable "for taking very firm measures" in extraordinary conditions. Therefore, the police was to be turned into a militarily organized body and placed under joint command with the gendarmerie." However, Jaross was removed from his post before he could have carried out his plan.

The spirit of the army stationed at home, and especially those preparing to go to the front, also made the authorities uneasy, as reflected by an order dated May 27 of the new Chief of Staff, Colonel-General János Vörös: "... I want to see each member of the staff of officers and rank and file an obedient fighter with iron discipline who fulfils his duty to the fatherland to the utmost; who does not *indulge in subversive criticism*, but follows blindly his superiors... I shall do my best that, within the limits of the country's financial position, *the fighting army should receive all care*, in order to exclude all possibility of just criticism." "Hostile" leaflets coming from the Eastern Front, from Hungarian anti-fascist organizations, or in the south, from Yugoslav partisans or thrown from Anglo-Saxon planes became more frequent in the army units stationed at home. There are very few data available on the state of discipline of the military units at home, but those available tend to show a deterioration of military moral. There was an increasing number of self-maiming among soldiers to be sent to the front. Despite severe punishments, the number of "unjustified late joiners" was on the rise. To improve the relations of officers and the rank and file, special canteens for the officers ceased to exist; libraries were ordered for each sub-division in order to divert the soldiers' attention from the events around them (formerly, it was prohibited to read books in the army). Reports on the atmosphere of the rank and file indicated growing discontent especially because of the cancelling of holidays at the time of harvest and threshing; among city dwellers, the main reason of discontent was the grave social situation of their relatives and the further deterioration of the quality of nourishment and clothing. To lessen discontent, the Cabinet increased war allowances by 20 per cent on August 2nd.

The rapidly increasing number of deserts and repudiation of call-up orders also indicated the deterioration of army spirit. This trend was well illustrated in *Bűnügyi Körözesek Lapja* (Journal of Criminal Warrants): a national warrant of apprehension was issued against 46 deserters on April 22, 81 on May 6, 114 on July 15, 151 on September 9, and 243 on October 7; most of the deserters came from the zone of the Budapest 1st Army Corps.

The propaganda carried out in the army by the Hungarian Front became more effective. The Chief of Staff was compelled to discuss the issue in a confidential order for officers. János Vörös stressed that the Hungarian Front was backed by communists, whose aim was "to beat the gun out ... of Hungarian hands and thus ease Hungary's forced occupation by bolshevik forces". He made it a duty for every officer to nip this subversive effort in the bud. A call issued by the Szeged district headquarters on August 14 also referred to the increasing activity of the Hungarian Front. The *volte face* of the Romanians and the presence of the Soviet Army at the Hungarian border were sufficient in themselves to diffuse "cowardliness", the drive to ensure "personal safety", "despair" and an atmosphere of "nothing matters" without the help of any additional propaganda—a report states.

The rapid deterioration of the situation was also shown by an order of the Budapest 10th Army Corps headquarters issued on September 5, threatening to punish cowardliness, desertion, throwing away guns and spreading rumours with

material law and capital punishment carried out immediately. Public executions were ordered, and the names of those sentenced to death were read out to every military unit.

These methods, however, proved insufficient by September. Speculating on the soldiers' and peasants' land-hunger, the government decided to offer land to those who excelled in combatting armoured cars. Vernacular properly called this order the "anti-tank land reform", under which five *holds* of land (c. 7.5 acres) or 15 000 Pengős, in case of death, ten *holds* of land or 30 000 Pengős, were granted to everybody who blew up a tank in close-range fighting. (There is no data to prove whether anybody actually received land for such an "exploit".) A call by Minister of Defence Lajos Csataj recruiting volunteers could not work miracles either. Already on June 7, Csataj called on those "who were thinking and feeling like patriots should" to report voluntarily. However, there were not many volunteers, therefore, on September 28 he called on the leaders of the Hungarian political and intellectual life to do voluntary service and thus follow their words with action and set an example "even to the poorest Hungarians".

By that time, the majority of the troops and even a part of the staff of officers had had enough of the war. True, others were preparing a pro-Nazi coup against the government of Géza Lakatos.

From this picture of the mood, behaviour, discontent and resistance of the different strata of Hungarian society one can draw the conclusion that the conditions of a breakaway were slowly ripening. Their evolution, however, did not keep pace with the requirements of the military and political situation. It was too weak to allow that the country be led out of the war on the side of the anti-fascist great powers, by relying on the anti-fascist forces, especially the Hungarian Front, still in the organizational phase. The willingness of the masses to resist could have been put to good use only if the conditions of a situation similar to the Romanian turn had develop, i.e. if the anti-Nazi ruling circles and the army would have united their forces with the Hungarian Front, with or without Horthy and, relying on the Soviet Army, would have turned against the Nazis. That would have freed the energies straining in the deep but incapable of surfacing otherwise. These prerequisites, however, as we shall see later on, were present partly only, and became abortive with the step taken by Horthy on October 15.

VI. Struggle of the Anti-Fascist Forces for a Break with Hitler The Horthyist Clique's Attempt to Break Away and Its Failure

On June 6, 1944, the British-American invasion forces landed in France, and with this move the long-delayed second front was opened. The day before, the Allied Forces occupied Rome. At end-June, the Soviet Army began a decisive military manoeuvre on the Eastern Front for the full liberation of Belorussia. In this situation, the Governor and the pro-Western groups were again considering the break with Germany and were pondering about how to get out of the war—on the side of the Western powers. First of all, they tried to disassociate themselves from the measure brought by the Sztójay government, primarily the deportations, for which Horthy did not feel responsible, as he wrote in a letter to Hitler.

Owing to the pressure of both domestic and foreign public opinion as well as to Bethlen's advice, Horthy postponed the deportation of the Budapest Jews which was planned to begin on June 30. He managed to avert Baky's gendarme-putsch aimed at removing those who exerted anti-German influence on Horthy, and thus render the deportation of the Budapest Jews possible. As a result of the worsening domestic and foreign political situation, and the controversies within the government, the Cabinet had broken up at end-July. Minister of Home Affairs Andor Jaross and Deputy Prime Minister Jenő Rátz resigned from their posts; Béla Imrédy and Antal Kunder resigned from the government. Sztójay went into hospital. Thus the remnants of the Sztójay government played only the role of mediator between Horthy and the Nazis, in the main, vexed issue, the deportation of the Budapest Jews, instead of exerting a real political influence on the events.

The cautious steps taken by Horthy and those around him were definitely related to the new hopes attached to the plans of British Prime Minister Churchill to land on the Balkans. The Governor and his followers still excluded the possibility that the Soviet Army could penetrate the territory of Hungary. They thought they would be able to resist the Soviets alongside the Carpathians until "help" came from the Balkans. In Summer 1944, Churchill carried out very active diplomatic and military activity in order to outpace the Soviet troops on the Balkans and in Central Europe. He hoped that if only the Northern Italian "Gothic" line could be broken, the units of General Alexander would reach Central Europe, Budapest, or at least Vienna, through Trieste and the Ljubljana-gap.

But while Horthy and those around him kept making eyes at the West, an unexpected turn of events took place in the East. The Red Army broke through the German-Romanian front in the region of Iași-Kislov. The Romanian anti-fascist forces and the anti-Nazi circles of the ruling classes together managed to overthrow the Antonescu government on August 23, and the Romanian troops joined the Red Army to fight the Nazis.

The news of the Romanian breakaway came upon the capital and the country like a thunderbolt. Both its political and military effects seriously affected the rulers of the regime. The dream of Horthy and those around him that the Soviet troops could be halted alongside the Carpathians vanished. "The effect of the Romanian turn—the situation report of the Budapest Police Headquarters stated—was harmful for the morals especially because it ruthlessly projected the nightmare of a Russian invasion to Hungarians and also foreshadowed an eventual attempt to follow the Romanian example."

After recovering his wits, Horthy rushed to inform the commissary of the Reich of his firm decision to "stick faithfully" to Germany; he then dismissed Sztójay and appointed a new government. The extraordinary session of the Cabinet on August 25-26, characterized by chaos, uncertainty and fear of the Red Army, decided that the anti-Soviet war had to be continued—until the arrival of the Anglo-Saxon powers.

VI. 1. The Lakatos Government

On August 25, Horthy entrusted General Géza Lakatos with the task of forming a new government. Meanwhile, in the West, Paris was liberated. Romania's breakaway was followed by a Slovak national uprising. In a few days, the greatest part of Central and Eastern Slovakia was liberated. On September 4, Finland capitulated; on September 8 the people of Bulgaria turned against the Nazis and joined the anti-fascist coalition.

The Romanian breakaway, the Slovak uprising and the quick advance of the Soviet Army created such a catastrophic situation for Germany that, theoretically, it would no doubt have been unable to halt a similar turn of events in Hungary if it was prepared to a certain degree militarily and politically. But Horthy and his clique wasted days with forming a new government instead, and then spent weeks on deciding on the issue of an armistice. Meanwhile, the Wehrmacht had time to consolidate the front lines and send adequate forces to restore its weakened positions in Hungary.

By that time, the bulk of the Hungarian ruling classes had no doubt about the fact that Germans had lost the war but were unable to take the necessary steps in time and with proper firmness to follow the only way out. A smaller group of the ruling classes, though suspecting the approaching ruin, were impassioned by the possibility of gaining power, believing in the wonder weapons, the explosion of the conflicts between the Soviets and the Anglo-Saxons or hoping for the impossible and they kept advocating an unconditional pro-Nazi stand. That is how the group

interests within the ruling classes clashed with the interests of the ruling class as a whole and especially with those of the nation. This attitude enabled Hitler to find a quick political solution to avert the Hungarian attempts at a breakaway.

The Lakatos government wanted to halt the Soviet Army alongside the Carpathians by setting up new military units, sending them to the front and hoping to get help from the Germans, so gaining time for an armistice that would be followed by British-American or, in the worst case, by British-American-Soviet occupation. The memorandum of the Chief of Staff dated September 4 was also related to these unrealistic ideas of the government. In the memorandum, János Vörös pointed out that "political development" "*is to be sought at the side of the Anglo-Saxon powers only*". On the basis of the concept worked out by the political and military leadership, Horthy and those around him renewed their talks on the breakaway with the Anglo-Saxon powers.

Both the sudden appearance of the Soviet troops in the Carpathian Basin and the news of the Finnish armistice compelled Horthy to take steps to conclude an armistice. After that, events befitting a political tragicomedy followed one another. On September 7, Horthy convened his military advisors and then, on the 10th, the Privy Council as well. The latter, although they, too, agreed that armistice talks should be launched, set preconditions that excluded all healthy development in advance. The Cabinet sessions of September 8 and 11 turned down the armistice proposals of the Privy Council, based, after all, on insecure soil. In the House of Representatives, which met after a five-month interval in September, Géza Lakatos had nothing to say about the statements of the Allied Forces urging a breakaway but that: "In view of the threats directed against us, it is not at all evident that advantages can be expected from giving in without delay."

After the two sessions of the Cabinet turning down the armistice proposal, Horthy decided to prepare the breakaway in a "closer family circle". His decision indicates the fact that the Governor's sphere of influence and basis had considerably decreased by that time. His hesitation, confusion, steps misfitting a head of state, as well as the sharpening controversies within the Hungarian ruling classes indicated the emergence of a deep political crisis, which, however, the Hungarian ruling classes proved to be incapable of solving, as it turned out from the steps taken by Horthy later. History has proved that a realistic appraisal of the situation went far beyond their capacity; therefore, they failed to work out not only a concept representing the interests of the nation, but even one that would have promoted their own class interests.

The "family clique" which met around September 20th decided to take yet another step towards the West. However, the idea to seek direct contacts with the Soviet Union has also turned up in the meantime. The discussion took a stand for armistice, relegating the task of its implementation to the "family clique", bypassing both government and general staff, and hoping that, at the decisive moment, the majority of the government, the general staff and the army, too, would follow their "Supreme Commander".

On September 22, according to plan, Horthy sent Colonel-General István Náday, his personal envoy, to the Italian General Headquarters of the Allied Forces by plane, hoping that he would gain the support of the Western powers for a unilateral armistice. Náday's mission failed, as could be expected.

Exploratory talks with the Soviet Union had already begun somewhat earlier. Some thought that the first steps were to be taken through the Soviet ambassador to Switzerland, or through Ambassador Mrs. Kollontay, accredited to Sweden, who had showed a willingness to negotiate already in 1943. The Transylvanian delegation attending the sessions of the Privy Council and the Cabinet and urging armistice were the first to suggest that an armistice delegation should be sent over the front line or the Slovak partisan basis to negotiate with the Soviet government. At the beginning, Horthy and his circle only wished to explore. They did not even want to hear of sending an official armistice delegation. In mid-September, they started a three-member non-official delegation headed by Baron Ede Aczél and composed by the Office for Breakaway of the representatives of the various illegal anti-Nazi groups. The delegation reached Moscow and was received there by the representatives of the Soviet government suggesting an immediate conclusion of the armistice. Aczél and his associates returned on October 2. In the meantime, however, Horthy sent the official armistice delegation led by Lieutenant General Gábor Faraghó, former military attaché to Moscow on September 28, through territories controlled by Slovak partisans. The armistice delegation arrived in Moscow on October 1 through Besztercebánya and Kyev.

While the debates about armistice went on behind the scenes, a growing part of the country's public opinion put pressure on the government. The Romanian breakaway, and then the Finnish armistice had a great impact on the petty bourgeoisie, and even on part of the staff of officers. The majority hoped for the possibility of an alternative similar to that in Finland, and inclined to the Germans' free withdrawal. A considerable part of the staff of officers noted very well the circumstances of the Finnish armistice—wrote Kálmán Kéry, Chief of Staff of the First Hungarian Army—and the officers would have preferred to follow the Finnish example rather than turn against the Germans immediately. This concept reflected well the reluctance to fight the Germans and also political *naïveté* of ignoring Hungary's very different strategic position. From another aspect, however, one has to notice that a forward step had been taken on the road leading up to the recognition that it was absolutely necessary to break with the Nazis. Most groups urging the armistice expected Horthy and the Lakatos government to solve the problem. This concept was further strengthened by the change of the government and by the news of the armistice fed by the Office for Breakaway. The commentary of Radio Kossuth on September 14 was right to term the manœuvring of the Horthyist circles a delusion aimed at putting off the democratic parties, and making the masses believe that "they do not have to act for peace: Horthy has already done that for them".

Some of the internal political measures taken by the Lakatos government had a similar effect. The suspension of the activity of political parties, the closing of party

centres affected the right wing, primarily the Arrow Cross Party. The removal of several pro-Nazi leaders who had been given important state positions after the German occupation was also directed against the right wing. Lakatos also insisted on solving the Jewish issue in a more humane way. The case of members of the Upper House and the House of Representatives arrested after March 19 was put on the agenda again. In the first half of September, some four hundred interned trade union functionaries were released, and promises were made to re-examine the case of several people under arrest.

Those in power sought to establish relations with anti-Nazi petty bourgeois groups holding various views. This task was undertaken by the Office for Breakaway set up in early 1944 under the leadership of Miklós Horthy Junior and becoming increasingly active after the Romanian turn. The staff of the Office for Breakaway included some leaders of the Governor's offices and the Guards, two leaders of counterintelligence, the commander of the River Forces as well as István Bethlen Junior, the son of the former prime minister. The Office for Breakaway had close connections with an illegal organization known as *Magyar Függetlenségi Mozgalom* (Hungarian Independence Movement). It recruited its members from various nationalist and revisionist groups in virtually all the ministries and especially in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the Ministry of Religion and Education, in the general staff of the Army, in the municipal corporation of the capital and among the prelacy (bishops Baron Vilmos Apor, József Mindszenty and László Ravasz).

Following the decision of the "family clique", the Office for Breakaway and the Hungarian Independence Movement tried to find persons absolutely faithful to the Governor through various channels to prepare the armistice. They also made efforts to influence and use for their purposes illegal bourgeois groups of a growing significance.

After the occupation, beside the parties and organizations of the Hungarian Front, a few illegal groups also tried their wings. Among them we have to mention in the first place those gathering round Nobel Prize Albert Szent-Györgyi. The group—which had begun to organize in 1943—included mainly intellectuals, but also civil servants and teachers with Anglo-Saxon orientation. Later a few members of Nemzeti Demokrata Párt (National Democratic Party), like Dr János Vázsonyi, the son of a former minister, also joined them. We find the famous writer Lajos Zilahy here, as well as Baron Viktor Krochina, Dr. Endre Morvay, Deputy Mayor of Budapest, and several high-ranking army and police officers. Members of the group considered Albert Szent-Györgyi someone who would have a place not only in the leadership of the future party but "in the high state dignitary of future Hungary", too. Szent-Györgyi was well known for his anti-Nazi sentiments; he had good relations with influential Anglo-Saxon political circles. Even Horthy accepted his advice, while Szent-Györgyi was not averse to cooperating with the left wing, the communists either. His group became a centre of attraction no doubt because of the personality of the scientist. After the German occupation they began illegal organization activity. They established links with the organized workers, some

trade union leaders, as well as other illegal groups, primarily with the so-called "Várnai group" of resistance fighters gathering round woman writer Zseni Várnai.

From August onwards a regular connection developed between the Office for Breakaway and the Szent-Györgyi group through Guard-General Károly Lázár. It can be read in several memoirs that in August Horthy conducted talks with Szent-Györgyi on forming a government. The Office for Breakaway would have liked to use Szent-Györgyi, the "non-committed man" as a mediator between the government and the various illegal organizations and parties. The Szent-Györgyi group undertook the commission.

By September, regular political and partly military training of about 60-80 people had begun. Their "cells" in various ministries and offices were built up like snow-balls. At political lectures it was emphasized on every occasion: "Left-wing elements have to be won in order to prevent that certain persons carry out destructive activity. Through the military links of this group the Office for Breakaway partly intended to gain an increasing number of people in the staff of officers of the army, partly to get direct information about the attitude to be expected of the staff of officers in case of an armistice. The officers joining the groups, mainly those of the River Forces, however, refused to be used as puppets. They paralyzed ship traffic on the Danube, primarily German freight transport, and carried out several individual actions against German military vehicles.

The Szent-Györgyi and the Várnai groups, in close contact with each other, issued the illegal paper *Márciusi Magyarország* (March Hungary) jointly. They also made pamphlets. The major part of the propaganda work was done by the Várnai group.

Articles published in *Márciusi Magyarország* mobilized against the Nazis. "Everybody asks: What will happen to us?"—the opening announcement of the paper reads. And the answer: "Let us not wait stupefied for the blind judgement of the storm of fate; we have to use our own power to handle our fate. . . Words are not enough, deeds are needed!" They called on their readers to follow the superb example of the Romanian, Slovak, Bulgarian, Finnish and French patriots: "For everything that is sacred for us: In arms, Hungarians!" The Várnai group wanted to incite to fight not only with words but with deeds, too. Already in September, the piling up of arms and ammunition began. Later they carried out some minor armed actions and many of the group got killed in the unequal struggle.

Another significant illegal organization was the Freedom Alliance of Hungarian Patriots (*Magyar Hazafiak Szabadság Szövetsége*). According to memoirs, the Alliance was formed in the second half of April, 1944. It included a group of writers regularly visiting the private room of Fészek Club, the disbanded János Vajda Association, and leaders of the National Public Educational Council, the Saint Stephen Student Alliance and the Pál Teleki Cooperative. In the Alliance, there were factory owners, teachers, judges of the Court of Appeal, engineers, a few communists from 1919, among them the most significant János Hirossik, Head of the Party Secretariat at the time of the Republic of Councils. Two well-known

leaders of the Revisionist League, Endre Fall and Ferenc Herczeg, as well as the famous film director, Ákos Hamza D. also worked in the Alliance.

The Freedom Alliance of Hungarian Patriots was directed by a five-member committee of various elements holding strong bourgeois views. The Office for Breakaway strongly influenced them. In the early stage of work, their propaganda activity deserves to be mentioned; they issued pamphlets and then in Summer 1944 they published the illegal paper *Szabadságharc* (Freedom Fight).

Real work began in early Autumn 1944. The Alliance outgrew the Szent-Györgyi group not only in number but also in significance. The Office for Breakaway and the Hungarian Independence Movement recognized this, and therefore strived to tighten relations with the organization and plant their men in it. To counterbalance the Hungarian Front, they tried to make the Alliance the centre of various illegal or semi-legal organizations. That is how in the autumn of 1944, their close connection with the Hungarian Federation of Friends of the Soviet Union (*A Szovjetunió Barátainak Magyarországi Egyesülete*) was established.

The Federation was founded in the summer of 1944 by Emil Fisch and Géza Péntes among others. First they tried to lessen the anti-Soviet hysteria and gain friends—mainly among intellectuals—for the Soviet Union by issuing publications, pamphlets and letters on the economic, cultural and political development of the Soviet Union. The Federation was in touch with the Communist Party from the very beginning.

In September 1944, the Federation set up several significant local organizations and connected a few illegal groups to the Freedom Alliance of Hungarian Patriots. Thus, for instance, a strong organization was built at the Újpest plant of Egyesült Izzó, where Count Dénes Jankovich, the General Manager, the famous Professor Zoltán Bay, and several engineers also joined their ranks. It was through them that Staff Colonel Jenő Nagy and many of his colleagues got involved in the independence movement. Through the Hungarian Federation of the Friends of the Soviet Union, a closer cooperation developed between the Freedom Alliance of Hungarian Patriots and the journalists of the banned *Magyar Nemzet*. Later, the Federation got in touch with "adventurer" groups which wanted to use the organization for their own individual political interest.

In the field of organization, the Freedom Alliance of Hungarian Patriots devoted great care to strengthen its relations with the trade unions, that is, with the Left. This endeavour helped them to get in contact with bookseller Imre Faust freed from the internment camp, known for his contacts with communists and with Miklós Somogyi, President of the Construction Workers' Union.

Their plans included the winning of the support of anti-Nazi army officers. Therefore, Baron Ede Aczél, President of the Wesselényi Marksman Association, undertook the task to gain the consent of Defence Minister Csataj to make the Association serve the purposes of the organization. Csataj rejected the request. Attempts to gain the support of the Budapest "rockcentre" air defence command yielded no success either.

At end-August and early-September, those who gathered around the Alliance conducted talks with István Bethlen Junior. They offered their service for the breakaway and urged the government to take more definite steps. Bethlen promised to pass the proposals on, and to arrange top-level talks, and asked the Freedom Alliance of Hungarian Patriots to develop a closer relationship with the left wing, the Hungarian Front, so that they could control and influence their activity.

The leaders of the Construction Workers' Union were also trying to build relations with bourgeois resistance, but for the opposite reason. They had men in the ministries, offices, universities, in the army and even at the police and gendarmerie. At the 2nd Department of the General Staff, for example, they had connection with Captain Zoltán Mikó and it was with his help that the first "partisan nest" was set up in Bimbó Street, Buda, in mid-September. First some twenty-twenty five, later fifty people were connected to this centre collecting weapons and explosives.

In view of the joint endeavour to seek relations, and the cooperation developed with the Construction Workers' Union, the Office for Breakaway felt compelled to include communist Imre Faust, too, in the non-official armistice delegation sent to the Soviet Union. After the delegation had departed, a discussion took place in the Castle attended by Miklós Horthy Junior, Gyula Ambrózy, Head of the Cabinet Bureau, and István Bethlen Junior representing the Office for Breakaway, and by Ferenc Magyary, Dezső Polgár, social democrat József Takács and Miklós Somogyi representing the various resistance groups. These latter demanded to break up the alliance with the Germans, to get out of the war at once and to provide the workers with arms. Horthy Junior—according to Miklós Somogyi's memoirs—shunned to give direct answer and was most interested in learning how the workers were to be armed and mobilized. Finally, he stated that the problems raised exceeded his sphere of authority and suggested that the delegation should confer with the Governor, too, at a later date.

The delegation met the Governor at end-September or in the first days of October. Memoirs have it that Miklós Somogyi was the leading spokesman. Horthy was interested mainly in what "the future of the historic middle class" would be in case "you were to gain power". Then similarly to his son he inquired about the arming and mobilization of the workers and wanted to know how they imagined the participation of workers in the breakaway. Horthy, too, gave evasive answers, to questions relating both to the plans of the breakaway, and the arming of the workers.

According to certain memoirs, at the negotiations held with the Office for Breakaway and with the Governor there was some talk about the person of the future prime minister as well as the future head of state. In case Horthy's person would have posed a problem at the conclusion of an armistice, the setting up of a governing council consisted of several members was suggested. The delegation proposed former Prime Minister István Bethlen to lead the government; he "was to select his staff, the members of the new government, from among people proposed by the organizers of the illegal movement". Similar views prevailed in the anti-Nazi

groups of the ruling classes and of the petty bourgeoisie, as related by Miksa Fenyő, a member of the Upper House, in his diary. In early October 1944, after the return of the "non-official delegation to Moscow", a delegation of the Freedom Alliance of Hungarian Patriots visited Bethlen Senior at Boronkapusztá near lake Balaton. Bethlen undertook the task connected with the armistice, and went to the capital to clarify the smaller points of his tasks with the Governor.

A small group gathering around the paper *Ellenállás* (Resistance) made their entrance on the political scene in the autumn of 1944. The group consisted mainly of intellectuals (Géza Steiner, Miklós Bauer, Iván Boldizsár, József Zimmer, Tibor Debrőczy). First they helped the Yugoslav partisans with medicines, bandage, in a few cases they even ensured medical and hospital treatment to severely wounded partisans. Later they helped persecuted people and army deserters to go to Yugoslavia. Their task was also to produce false papers and even to collect arms. Through relations with the Red Cross, the group established the Committee to Help Hungarian Refugees; they gave the vindictory documents and the stamp of the Committee to those who joined them or were in trouble.

In September 1944, they decided to publish the illegal paper *Ellenállás*. In it, they offered union and alliance to "all movement, organization or endeavour aimed at the elimination of Nazism and, moreover, to all exertion aimed at building up the new Hungary based on political, social and economic democracy in close cooperation with the allied nations, primarily the Soviets". They urged the arming of the workers; strongly criticized the impotence of the Hungarian government, the political blindness of the middle class which served as a basis of German and Arrow-Cross plans, and of the ruling circles fearing a breakaway. They scourged the extremely hideous anti-Soviet scandal-mongering which "at other times would have been a disgusting, tasteless attempt only, but in the present situation—when talks with the Soviet Union are under way—is a severe political crime". This was, by the way, the only illegal paper which already at the beginning of October gave news of the "non-official" and later "the official" armistice delegation's trip to Moscow. It announced the return of the first delegation and the positive results of the exploratory talks. It also published the Romanian armistice agreement in order to influence Hungarian public opinion in a favourable direction. The paper communicated valuable news on the events of Hungarian resistance as well as the attempted puches of the Arrow-Cross men. It was circulated mainly by post.

In September 1944, there were several other independent initiatives, but—for lack of data—we cannot even deduce the persons behind them. The Intellectual Organizational Committee for example, had a bi-weekly publication with a note saying that it was "fighting for the liberation of the Hungarian people, and is published somewhere in Hungary". Its first pamphlet protested against the murder of half a million of Jews deported from Hungary. Of the Committee's publications, 11 pamphlets are available now; they all call to fight, outlining the concrete tasks of popular struggle.

The first signs of the activity of a group called Hungarian Resistance Movement and its illegal paper *Szabad Szó* (Free Word) became visible in September. They

attacked the Lakatos government to which Hungarian public opinion attached so much hope, but "each and every measure of the new government shows that it wants to continue the senseless and hopeless war". The paper quoted the idea of the Hungarian ruling classes, the Governor and those around him, that an armistice could be concluded without the Soviet Union and Hungary could wait for the allied troops to arrive from Italy as the *non plus ultra* of political blindness. There were reference to the French maquisards, the heroic partisans of the Balkans, the tradition of freedom struggle in Hungarian history in every issue of the paper mobilizing for action.

The Federation of Clandestine Hungarians called upon the masses for sabotage, armed struggle, and fight against the Germans and "our mean leaders". Although the Federation wanted to follow in Pál Teleki's and Miklós Kállay's footsteps, they thought the time had come for the Hungarian people to fight with arms for their "freedom and honour".

Civil servants carrying out organizational activity in the municipal corporation of the capital prepared and circulated a pamphlet signed by the "Hungarian People's Front". They urged sabotage, resistance, and called upon everyone who wanted to fight the Nazis to join them. There were also pamphlets demanding a democratic peace government headed by former Defence Minister Vilmos Nagybacsoni Nagy. Other illegal publications were signed by a "Hungarian Republican Party". There were also pamphlets of a few words only, and inscriptions, too, saying: "We Want Peace!", "Immediate Peace!", "Peace!"; police reports agreed that these were the results of individual initiative. At many places, posters of the Arrow Cross or the government were covered with slogans demanding peace.

In early October, the appeal entitled "The First Message of the Hungarian Opposition Parties to the Hungarian People!" was circulated in the form of a pamphlet. We ignore which parties worded the document, or whether they were parties at all, or just a few opposition politicians. So far its history could not be unearthed. According to the pamphlets, the representatives of the "opposition parties" were compelled to act because "three Russian armies have crossed the Hungarian border, and are advancing towards the heart of the country, Budapest". The "cowardly and criminal government . . . does not recognize or does not want to recognize the urging command of the catastrophic situation: to continue the war is to murder the nation". A new government was needed to ask for an armistice at once, to end "the war serving exclusively alien aims, so that, in the last minute, we might stop the process which would turn our unfortunate country into a heap of smouldering ruins, the cemetery of Eastern Europe".

Thus by the autumn of 1944, the various anti-German bourgeois groups had either joined the Office for Breakaway, or sought links with the Hungarian Front, or else they attempted to exert an influence on the Governor and the government and to make the masses resist alone, by using the means offered by propaganda only, but *approaching* the sphere of deeds all the same. Doubtless, many of the participants of these groups embraced resistance only in order to save the bourgeois

regime, to halt or influence the expected revolutionary transformation. But whatever the ulterior motive behind the deeds, they risked their lives, helped Hungarian resistance, and urged the Governor to take steps for an armistice. But there were men and women in the bourgeois resistance who were there because of their anti-fascist conviction, and were seeking and also finding contact with the communists. However, few of these groups only reached the point of concrete action. Some of them were arrested, others dispersed on hearing the news of the October 15 event, or had no courage to act. They were fighting under difficult circumstances. Apart from a few large groups emerging in September 1944, they were isolated, and had no links with the masses. It was because of their late emergence and dispersion that resistance centres agreeing on the issue of an immediate armistice could not play as significant a role as a united stand would have allowed them. That is why they failed to become a more significant political factor.

Anyway, by Autumn 1944, the Hungarian Front had become the most significant political force with the reorganized Communist Party as its prime mover.

The Paris uprising, the examples of the Romanian and Slovak people, the events in Bulgaria and Finland, and the deepening political crisis of the Hungarian ruling circles all increased the peace desire of the population, and these fast-occurring events revealed the weaknesses of the resistance led by the Hungarian Front and, within this, those of the Peace Party as well. The Central Committee of the Peace Party, which had also been dissatisfied with the results, concentrated all its efforts on accelerating anti-fascist struggle. It decided to change the name of the party first of all, and to reorganize the Communist Party. This thought had already occurred in March, 1944, immediately before the German occupation, but the events prevented the change. In the months preceding the occupation, the Peace Party became a well-known force, and earned great respect. Therefore, in the given dramatic situation a change of names would have led to further disturbances; it might have even hindered anti-fascist unity. That is why the Central Committee then decided to put this question on the agenda at a more appropriate time.

The occasion had come in early September, 1944. The Central Committee discussed the activity of the party, especially that of the Peace Party during the war on several occasions. When "the war broke through our borders... the means of struggle used by the Peace Party proved insufficient. Beside large-scale propaganda work, the mobilization of the masses and their rallying is most important today." An agreement was reached that the organization of the Communist Party would no longer hinder but, on the contrary, would help to strengthen a national front and the organization of armed resistance, because anti-Nazi forces had to reckon with realities, and the "psychological" deterrence of the partners was also vanishing. Another reason why the name-change was necessary was the fact that various illegal groups were seeking contact with the Communist Party, but more than once got into contact with factions acting in the name of the party. These factions misled pro-communist, sympathizer elements with pseudo-leftish slogans, monopolizing the name "communist".

The newly-formed *Kommunista Párt*, the Communist Party (CP), informed the public of its new name in a pamphlet on September 12 and pointed out that the political line of the party remained the same, despite its new name and the fact that the Red Army was at the borders of the country. The CP made no secret of the fact that its final objective was to create a socialist Hungary, but it emphasized repeatedly that it considered as its direct aim the establishment of a democratic Hungary. The pamphlet called attention to the acceleration of the struggle waged for the liberation of the country. It warned Horthy and those around him that "if they do not follow the example of Mannerheim... they will come to the same fate as German war criminals". The pamphlet incited to armed struggle, strike, and demonstration; German occupants had to be driven out with arms, and the government had to be compelled to act by mass movements.

At about the same time, the central Committee sent the members of the party a political bulletin discussing the complex situation that had evolved after the Romanian breakaway, and the tasks of the Hungarian anti-fascist forces. The party document gave a high-level analysis of the immense global political and military successes of the Allied Forces. The Nazi defeats suffered on the Western Front and on the Balkans indicate—the bulletin stated—that "the collapse of the German military front has started and it is now advancing fast to the end". Consequently, "Hitler's system of political alliance" was on the verge of collapse. With the detailed analysis of the Romanian situation the communists sought to draw the lessons of the Romanian example for the national forces and for party policy and also to discover the reason behind the fact that Hungary did not follow the example of the other Nazi allies. The publications of the other illegal groups also examined the causes of missing the favourable opportunities presenting themselves after the Romanian breakaway. However, the majority of these provided superficial evaluations only. The Central Committee of the Communist Party was not satisfied with that, and tried to go to the heart of the matter in order to be able to define the tasks lying ahead of the anti-fascist forces not superficially but by relying on the essence of things. The analysis showed three basic reasons for the failure of the Hungarian breakaway in September: 1) The Red Army had deeply penetrated into Romania, while it stood only at the borders of Hungary. 2) "In Hungary, because of the lack of an active stand of the masses, the ruling classes were not compelled to act urgently—as in Romania—, therefore, they can always wait and hope for a non-existent third road: an anti-Soviet British-American solution". And, finally, the third and most decisive reason: "its 25-year counter-revolutionary past made the Hungarian bourgeoisie so stiff, and reactionary policy has become such an old tradition with them that they cannot break with it, not even in their own interests".

The party document went on to say that in the favourable situation created by Romania's turn, the clique of the Governor playing with the idea of a breakaway used this new "position of balance" to return to the road "from where they were swung by the German military force on March 19". The Lakatos government, replacing the traitor Sztójay, and embodying "an increasing hesitation of Hungarian reactionary bourgeoisie", "is most dangerous", despite its positive

steps, "because it is more capable of misleading Hungarian public opinion and of going on with the war than its predecessor was". Therefore, democratic forces must uncover the two-faced policy pursued by Horthy and those around him; they must prevent that the forces of national liberation be condemned to opportunism and idleness. This, however, was possible only if the democratic forces were to "turn towards the masses", if they undertook and urged without any ulterior motive the launching of *organized mass struggle and mass actions*. The document emphasized the decisive role of taking an active stand by the working class.

The document gave a thorough analysis of the complicated relation between the resistance movement and Horthy's clique. This was all the more necessary since the above-mentioned illegal groups and even the parties of the Hungarian Front, especially the Smallholders Party, could imagine the breakaway only together with Horthy. The communists, keeping in mind the lessons of the Romanian events, agreed. Not only because they were ready to cooperate with every group that would break with the Germans, so even with Horthy and those around him, but also because they were of the opinion that, in the given situation, the struggle of the Hungarian people had not developed fully as yet; the people was not strong enough to make the country's policy change course on its own, "whereas its union with leading strata, the common struggle of the people and the army, would be able to drive out the Germans and could save the country..." On this issue there still was a basic difference of views between the Communist Party and the other parties. The communists made no secret of their opinion that the ruling circles were to be *forced* to break with Hitler's alliance together with the Hungarian nation, instead of playing dangerous games behind the curtain; the smallholders and other bourgeois groups, on the other hand, still trusted in Horthy, found negotiations with him or with his envoys satisfactory, and they shunned from attacking the person of the Governor and, above all, feared the deployment of "mass pressure". The smallholders, and partly the social democrats, too, counted with a breakaway carried out *together with Horthy*, considering this the sole alternative, whereas the Communist Party declared that other possible solutions were to be sought for.

The organization of the communist Party brought about no serious change in its organizational position; the organs and members of the Peace Party became the organs and members of the Communist Party. Still, some efforts were made to adjust party mechanism better to the slogans of "facing the masses" and "organized mass actions". Changes took place first of all in the Central Committee. After János Kádár's arrest in April, the post of secretary remained vacant. In mid-September, László Rajk was entrusted with this post after he had been released from prison and he got involved in the activity of the Central Committee at once. László Rajk had been one of the initiators of the people's front policy already in the thirties. He took part in the movement launched to reform the tuition system; he was one of the organizers of the construction workers' strike in 1935; he fought in the Spanish freedom struggle; he was in French and Hungarian internment camps and prisons. Therefore, he had rich experiences, which helped him combine theory and practice with his directing ability. On Rajk's initiative the Central Committee was

reorganized, its work became more operative, more to the point. First of all comrades in direct contact with workers were asked to participate in the work of the leadership. That is how construction worker Antal Apró, having close links with the Construction Workers' Union, and ironworker Bertalan Bartha, having close relations with the ironworkers got into the Central Committee, together with leather worker Károly Kiss, who knew many who were released from internment camps and also many old illegal communists seeking relations with the CP. The vanguard gathering around the Central Committee covered an ever-widening territory, which they connected to the party leadership. For example, the Central Committee was represented indirectly in the Hungarian Front, and directed partisan organizing activity, and talks with various partners also indirectly.

At end-September 1944, after more than two years' interval, *Szabad Nép* (Free People) was published again. The Central Miners' Committee issued an independent paper under the title *Harcoló Bányász* (Fighting Miner). At the end of September the Military Committee of the party was set up under the leadership of György Pálffy, with Lajos Fehér and László Sólyom as members. Pálffy, who directed the military propaganda of the Hungarian Front from July 1944 onwards, continued to fulfil this role, but the bulk of his work was the organization of armed struggle. The Military Committee entrusted Lajos Fehér with the organization of partisan groups in Budapest. Already in September, groups under the name of Szir, Marót and Laci were set up, and several organizations which had functioned as action groups before were being reorganized. However, at that time the main task of the Military Committee was to establish relations with various anti-Nazi military groups and to prepare the arming of the workers.

In the autumn of 1944, illegal factory and professional organizations or their embryos urged by the Communist Party and by Radio Kossuth were set up in several factories. There were some in several plants of the giant Csepel factory in the summer and early autumn of 1944. Later, in the first half of October, the so-called "Committee of 13" led by communist József Kalamár was set up to direct these groups. In this committee, communists, social democrats and members of the Demény faction took part. In the night of August 22-23, Csepel workers blew up the plant's magnesium store; that is how their armed resistance began. Illegal factory bodies were formed in large factories like the Kőbánya Bourgeois Brewery, the Kőbánya plant of the Duna Aircraft Factory, the Cog-Wheel Factory, the Hungarian Steelware Works, the MÁVAG, the United Glow-Lamp Factory, the Mechanic Weaving Factory, the Ganz factories and at other places. In the Ganz Shipyard, the illegal group organized the blowing up of the accumulator space of two ships under making and occupied by the Germans, an action which retarded construction work by months.

According to data unearthed up to the present time, two major centres of illegal organization were shaping in the industrial centres of the countryside. One of them covered the most important coal basins, and was led by the Central Miners' Committee of the Peace Party. Organization was in the most developed stage at the Tata coal basin where resistance was directed by a 4-member committee. The

number of members directly involved in the movement was about eighty to a hundred at Tatabánya in early September. Slowdowns, absence from work and sabotage actions were organized. The mine's leadership explained the 50 per cent decrease of production in August by political reasons: the activity of the local communist groups. Preparation for armed partisan struggle also began there. A group of local leaders tried to get in touch with two hundred Soviet prisoners of war of the Környebánya camp to organize partisan struggle. Negotiations began on common task but the plan failed because they were betrayed. The Gestapo arrested first those directly involved in the plan, then the Hungarian gendarmerie joined in and by the beginning of September, 58 participants of the movement were arrested. This was a serious blow which provisionally paralyzed resistance; however, at the end of September, the illegal organizations were formed again in the Tata coal basin, and a local committee was also set up. Those members of the Central Miners' Committee who were still at large directed illegal organization work from Budapest and prepared armed actions. In other mining areas, too, resistance and partisan struggle was organized by local communists and trade union leaders.

The other centre of illegal organization in the countryside was in the Northern Hungarian industrial settlement, around Miskolc and Diósgyőr. The resistance of the Diósgyőr workers had been of national significance already in the summer of 1943, and it established the basis for a comprehensive anti-Nazi organization. After the occupation, the workers deprived of some of their social democratic leaders did not remain idle. The members of the resistance, led by communists and left-wing social democrats, set out to coordinate the scattered actions of the Diósgyőr Iron Factory. The Central Committee of the Communist Party gave its consent to their work and helped them. Their organization soon outgrew the factory; they were soon joined by anti-fascist intellectuals and inmates of forced labour camps. At the end of the summer, some thirty to forty people were attached to the movement, and more than a hundred knew about its organizational work. The autumn events, that is, the fact that Romania and Finland detached themselves from the fascist coalition, and the national uprising in the neighbouring Slovakia, had a great impact on the workers of the industrial settlement. Results achieved in organization and the general mood of the workers compelled the communist-social democrat collective to mobilize another anti-war demonstration in the new plant of the Diósgyőr Iron and Steel Works on September 21, 1944. That morning, the workers of the D9 Mounting Shop marched to the Directorate of the factory. Their example was followed by some 1500 to 2000 people. Along the way and in front of the building of the Directorate they demanded to follow the Finnish example, to end the war, and peace. The management of the factory was startled by the incident. They demanded immediate counter-measures, first of all by the armed forces. However, the success of the action convinced those who directed the resistance that they were on the right road and workers were following them.

This event considerably increased the influence of the so-called *Magyarországi Kommunista Antináci Komitéja* (the Anti-Nazi Committee of Hungarian Communists, MOKAN) established at Miskolc with a communist leadership, on

workers and other anti-fascist circles. The activity of these organizations later spread to the whole industrial area. Available data corroborate the setting up of illegal factory organizations at Szeged, Szolnok, and Pécs and in the Győr Wagon Factory in September 1944. In the work of the Győr organization, communists, local trade union leaders and other anti-fascists took part. The party tried to develop closer relations with these organizations to involve, through them, an increasing number of factory workers in the preparation of armed resistance.

The strengthening of the Communist Party and its clear-cut and definite program also had a favourable influence on the activity of the Hungarian Front which at end-August and in early-September still cherished Horthyist illusions and therefore its inner contradictions sharpened. Representatives of the Smallholders Party and partly the social democrats preferred to negotiate with various Horthyist people and watched the attempts to break away with extreme confidence. This provisionally strengthened the position of the above-mentioned groups of the Hungarian Front. That is why they considered the proposal of the Communist Party to include the National Peasant Party in the Hungarian Front as an attempt to weaken their influence. (In the meantime, communists managed to establish relations with leading members of the Peasant Party.) First Dessewffy and the others hoped that they could gain the support of Béla Kovács, General Secretary of the Peasant League, and get him to join the Hungarian Front—this was pressed by the communists, too—, and counter-balance thereby the influence of the National Peasant Party. However, when after repeated talks, they still could not persuade Béla Kovács and through him this important organization to join, they tried to exclude the Peasant Party from the resistance movement by violent protest.

Despite the inner debates, considerable results were achieved. In early September, the Executive Committee of the Hungarian Front was formed from the representatives of the three parties and of the organizations which had joined the Front. Árpád Szakasits was elected its president; communists were represented by Gyula Kállai, smallholders, legitimists and church groups first by Gyula Dessewffy, Zoltán Pfeiffer, Pongrácz Kenessey and József Pálffy. At the time of its formation, a pamphlet was issued, signifying presumably an independent step of the bourgeois wing of the Hungarian Front.

The appeal partly reflected the differences of views of the partners, partly the strengthening of the positions of the bourgeois forces and their separate actions. It was no accident that the pamphlet derived the Hungarian Front—contrarily to what was said in the announcement of its formation in June—from the August 1943 alliance of the Social Democratic and Smallholders Parties. There was not a word in the appeal about the role of the Soviet Union, although the events would have justified to emphasize its role much more than in June 1944. The pamphlet also lacked the call for armed struggle; it discussed anti-German struggle in general terms only. Although the first of its demands was "an immediate armistice and the disarmament and driving out of Germans from Hungary", there is not even a hint as to how this was to be carried out. It is especially striking that instead of the slogan

"independent, free, democratic Hungary" the pamphlet only contains "independent and free Hungary".

In order to decrease negative features emerging in the Hungarian Front, the Communist Party issued an appeal to the Hungarian people in a which it took an unambiguous stand on the issue of democratic transformation, offering a constructive program of development. On the other hand, the communists tried to counterbalance the hesitation of the bourgeois by strengthening the position of the two workers' parties and the involvement of the National Peasant Party in the Hungarian Front.

In an appeal issued at end-September 1944, the Communist Party pointed out that the anti-Nazi freedom fight was of a dual character: *Fight for independent Hungary by driving out the occupying German imperialist power! Fight for the establishment of democratic Hungary by overthrowing Hungarian reaction!* The fight ahead them was above all of an anti-fascist, but also of an anti-feudalist, and anti-imperialist character, and since under the impact of the liberating mission of the Soviet Union the international situation became ever more favourable, it had a good chance to create the preconditions of the victory of the socialist revolution. The document indicated the direct political and organizational tasks. Above all, it urged the establishment of the fighting and organizational unity of the working class, for "the success of the struggle depends on whether we can manage to establish the full fighting unity of our class and thus that firm, indissoluble front to which the majority of the Hungarian people can adhere with confidence". The appeal demanded the resignation of the government and *the formation of a government of the Hungarian Front*, further, that the army should give help to arm workers and peasants so that "we may sweep out the alien, predatory, occupying troops together with the liberating Soviet troops".

The communists multiplied their efforts as dictated by the appeal in order to establish the political unity of action of organized workers. Talks began between the leaders of the two workers' parties. Szakasits accepted the proposal put forward by the Central Committee of the Communist Party that since they represented a common standpoint within the Hungarian Front, they should counterbalance the manoeuvres of the smallholders. Closer cooperation between the two parties was already reflected in some important fields—such as the admission of the National Peasant Party—, but the positive influence of the common standpoint manifested itself not only within the frames of the Hungarian Front, but provided a good starting point for the comprehensive negotiations on cooperation between the two workers' parties.

The negotiations began in the second half of September 1944. The first draft serving as the basis for the negotiations was prepared by Gyula Kállai and László Rajk on behalf of the Central Committee and was dated September 25. Although the draft contained essentially the same ideas as the one which was later signed, there were some important differences as well. The first document summed up the tasks in six points; it did not deal with the trade unions and did not touch upon the problem of the youth either. But it formulated more definitely the significance of the

unity of action of the two workers' parties in the fight "for peace, for the establishment of an independent, free and radically popular democratic Hungary". The draft speaks of the union of the two parties, "the establishment of the only and unified Hungarian revolutionary workers' party" as an urgent task. The final document, however, is worded more cautiously: "Under the present circumstances, the elaboration of the conditions of the union of the two parties would only hinder them in carrying out their direct and common tasks of struggle; therefore, the two parties postpone the issue of union for after the war." The amendment was not accidental. On the one hand, it would have been very difficult to sign such an agreement and later to make the whole Social Democratic Party accept this move. On the other hand, the communists made efforts to involve in the negotiations other representatives of the SDP, too, beside Árpád Szakasits, and, if possible, even the leaders of the Trade Union Council. Szakasits agreed to seek connection with the leaders of the trade unions again despite the fiasco in April 1944, partly to involve them in the Hungarian Front, partly to extend the negotiations on unity to the trade unions as well.

In Autumn 1944, the position of the trade unions changed considerably. As we have mentioned before, the Lakatos government ensured them a greater scope of action and wanted to rely on them to a greater extent than the Sztójay government. But the main reason of the change is to be sought for in the workers' fast leftward shift and their renewed interest in trade unions. Trade union leaders released from internment camps played an important role in the upswing, too, since they had developed closer contacts with communists in the camps, and having clarified their tasks, they took up work immediately after their release. Getting back to their workplace, they did not resume work where they had left it off at the time of their arrest. They joined the work of the trade unions and other workers' organizations, and initiated various actions against the Germans and the government. There was a growing number of local trade union leaders of communist conviction urging political actions, joining the resistance movement, or at least tacitly agreeing with it. The number of those who launched actions to realize economic goals, and even used factory executive bodies, civil defence organizations, and the national guard as cover organizations for launching organized resistance, also increased.

At that time, the select leading group of the TUC, the Committee of Seven, got in touch not with the Hungarian Front, but with various illegal groups, the Szent-Györgyi group, the Freedom Alliance of Hungarian Patriots, and through them established links with the Office for Breakaway, too. Negotiations with the representatives of the Lakatos government became permanent. However, left-wing trade union leaders urged close cooperation with the Hungarian Front. Mass pressure made the members of the Committee of Seven tacitly acquiesce to the fact that trade union members distributed leaflets of the Hungarian Front and the communists, but they still refrained from the actions demanded in the leaflets. Still, there were some people even in their direct surroundings who refused to "listen to reason". In the leaderships of Construction Workers' Union, the ironworkers', miners', leather workers' and private employees' unions more and more people

followed the appeals of the communists and left-wing social democrats calling for resistance. The establishment of an illegal SDP network also accelerated. Beside the group of Árpád Szakasits, organization began with the leadership of György Marosán and Antal Bán, and Illés Mónus was also drawn in the work. They made the Kabók group accept a more definite left-wing policy on the platform of the Hungarian Front.

Under the combined effect of the above circumstances, the fact that the Red Army had already stepped on Hungarian soil and the repeated appeals of Árpád Szakasits, some of the leaders refusing to negotiate with the Hungarian Front and especially with the communists before were now forced to sit down to the conference table. At the end of September and at the beginning of October 1944, Antal Bán, an SDP functionary of increasing influence, as well as Lajos Kabók, the head of the Trade Union Council also joined the talks going on between the two workers' parties. The presence of right-wing leaders and others who were still hesitating between Left and Right had both a positive and a negative effect, as indicated by the final document. It became possible that the document submitted for signing should deal with the trade unions and the establishment of a joint socialist youth organization in separate points. The final document, however, contained several compromising formulae preceded by more definite and unambiguous ones in the original text.

According to the agreement, the two parties promised intensive cooperation in the field of anti-Nazi struggle and to prevent that communists be isolated within the Hungarian Front and any attempt aimed at breaking with them. A quick end to the war and the establishment of a new, democratic Hungary could be ensured only with "the fighting, revolutionary unity of the working class, its firm stand and guidance". The aim of both parties was socialism, but that could only be achieved by breaking with the Nazis and "establishing an independent, free, democratic Hungary". They were to carry out close cooperation in the struggle and coordinate all steps in the "connective committee" to be set up immediately. The agreement also laid down their intent to establish, after the war, the unified and sole revolutionary socialist party of the working class by merging the two parties, in order to further the revolutionary unity of the Hungarian working class.

Statements concerning the trade unions seemed to be of great significance. The document pointed out that "irrespective of the time when the two parties merge, the unity of the Hungarian working class should be established without delay in the life of the trade unions". In the course of decision-making in the unified Federation of Free Trade Unions, neither party "will hinder the free expression of the workers' will". The "Clause" attached to the document was to lay down conditions of joining of the Trade Union Council, the tasks of each trade union in the anti-fascist struggle. According to the "Clause" the task of shop steward meetings to be convoked was to mobilize organized workers to set up the district and local organizations of the Hungarian Front as well as factory committees. The task of the committees to be formed was "the organization of immediate strikes, demonstrations based on the economic demands of the workers; increasing sabotage and

explosions, preparations for declaring a general strike, and finally the development of the frames of a workers' militia immediately in every factory and trade union organization". The mobilizing of workers in rural towns and villages was also to be the task of trade unions.

However, after the negotiations, Lajos Kabók and Antal Bán, referring to the refusal of the Committee of Seven, unexpectedly refused to sign the document of unity. Consequently, on October 10, 1944, the document of unity was signed only by Gyula Kállai and Árpád Szakasits on behalf of the Communist and the Social Democratic Parties. The document put this new anti-labour step of right-wing trade union leaders "modestly" on record as follows: the "Clause", the statements concerning the trade union, and the point concerning the setting up of a unified youth body "have been taken off the agenda by the signatories".

The retreat of Kabók and those around him was no doubt motivated, beside their marked hesitation experienced throughout the negotiations, by the fact that the government ordered the closing down of the trade-union headquarters of the Ironworkers' Union in Magdolna Street referring to the communist organizational activity going on in the trade unions. This measure of the government was an organic part of the plans aimed at upsetting the unity of the left wing at all costs. The Office for Breakaway let them know that the trade unions would be defended if the Office, too, could rely on their support. The Committee of Seven was scared by this new attack against the trade unions and, fearing for their legality, did not dare to break with the policy of Peyer, did not dare to undertake the risks accompanying the signing of the document and the tasks ahead of the trade unions. Right-wing trade union leaders preferred to side with Horthy and agreed to play, in the breakaway, the part allotted then by the Governor. Their decision decreased the impact of the action of unity of the two workers' parties and prevented the trade unions from actually joining the resistance and becoming an organic part of the Hungarian Front.

Despite the absence of the trade unions, the agreement of the two workers' parties was an outstanding achievement of the decade-long policy of unity of action pursued by the communists. It was of a dual, theoretical and practical, significance. Its theoretical declaration not only played an outstanding part in the development of national resistance, but pointed far beyond that. Emphasizing the leading role of the working class in the national front meant a break with the earlier social democratic practice of reducing the working class to the status of the political train-bearer of the bourgeois parties. The agreement took a stand by the autonomous class policy of the proletariat. The document of unity laid down the foundations of future, post-liberation cooperation between the two workers' parties, and the quick refutation of Peyerist opportunist policy, and became a starting point for the endeavour embodied finally in the united revolutionary party of the working class. In the given situation, the main role, of course, would have been played by the common mobilization of all organized workers; that was to be the direct practical significance of the action of unity. However, due to the attitude of right-wing leaders and the failure to mobilize trade unions, this could not be realized to the

required extent. Those social democratic workers who came to know about the agreement of the front of unity uniformly welcomed it, a fact that points to the responsibility of the leaders more clearly than anything else.

The negotiations and the uniform stand of the two workers' parties had a favourable impact on the debate concerning the admission of the National Peasant Party. Since Dessewffy and Pfeiffer repeatedly turned down the request to involve the representatives of the Peasant Party, too, the communists and social democrats addressed Tildy. Zoltán Tildy, invested with plenary power at the extended executive meeting of the Smallholders Party in March 1944, accepted the proposal of the two parties and gave his consent to the joining of the National Peasant Party. (At end-September 1944 a special leaflet was issued on this move which was posted to the rural population.) Thus, at the end of September 1944, the National Peasant Party also joined the Hungarian Front. From that time on, it was represented in the common front by Imre Kovács. When the Front was to bring important decisions, the Smallholders Party was represented by Zoltán Tildy. The *Nemzeti Ellenállás Diákmozgalom* (Student Movement of National Resistance) set up by the Student Committee of the Peace Party and issuing the illegal papers *Szabad Diák Front* and *Szabad Élet* (Free Student Front and Free Life) joined the Hungarian Front at the beginning of September.

From early September on, an increasing number of signs indicated the willingness of the Governor and his regime to establish direct links with the Hungarian Front. Leaders of the Hungarian Front were also considering this question; they were watching the political impotence of the Horthyist circles as well as signs of German and Arrow-Cross preparations with increasing anxiety. Therefore, they decided to send a memorandum to Horthy warning him of the approaching catastrophe, the inevitable necessity of immediate action and the conclusion of an armistice. They decided to inform Horthy of the Hungarian Front's standpoint and the conditions under which they would be ready to cooperate with the Governor. On September 20, 1944, the memorandum was signed on behalf of their parties by Tildy, Szakasits and Kállai. (The name of the representatives of the National Peasant Party did not figure on the document as yet.) The memorandum stated: "aware of its severe historic responsibility, the Hungarian Front considers it necessary to state its standpoint categorically at the last minute when cooperation to save the country and its future can still be established between the democratic parties of the country and the Hungarian Army". For them, there was no other choice but to prevent "in union with the advancing Russian Army", that "our country should become a battlefield. . . ." The Hungarian Front was ready to negotiate and cooperate with the Governor under the following conditions:

"1. The Hungarian Army ends all further hostility with the Allied Forces and disarms the German armed forces on Hungarian territory.

2. Hungary declares war on Germany.

3. Simultaneously, Hungary sends delegations to the governments of the Allied Forces in order to conclude an armistice and establish military cooperation against Germany.

4. A coalition government is set up from the parties of the Hungarian Front and the representatives of the army."

The fourth point presumes that the persecution of the democratic parties would be ended without delay; political prisoners would be released; leaders of the army and the other armed bodies as well as pro-Hitler exponents of the political hierarchy would be removed and arrested.

Tildy sent the memorandum to Ambrózy, Head of the Governor's Cabinet Bureau, and it was through him that the memorandum reached Horthy. "Tildy was informed of its receipt"—wrote Szakasits—"but then nothing happened for weeks afterwards". The answer was late, but links were established with the direct surroundings of Horthy. Imre Kovács got in touch with General István Újszászy who had also received the memorandum. In September, Imre Kovács and other negotiators conferred several times with Újszászy, and it is also known that they met General of the Guards Lázár and Horthy Junior. Horthy and his people considered the negotiations exploratory ones; they let it be known that something was under way, without ever giving an exact picture of their plans.

The first significant negotiation between the Hungarian Front and Horthy took place either at the end of September or at the beginning of October. The meeting was attended by Zoltán Tildy and Árpád Szakasits and by Chief of Staff János Vörös. Representatives of the Hungarian Front were accompanied to the negotiation by György Pálffy, too. High-ranking officers who had connections with the Social Democratic Party, for example Staff Colonel Rezső Hadácsi, Ferenc Kárlóczy and Brigadier General Pál Encsy, the Governor's doctor, also joined the talks.

The second memorandum of the Hungarian Front—drafted, according to memoir-sources by László Rajk—was prepared for this negotiation. It pointed out clearly and unambiguously that there was no power that could halt the Soviet Army on Hungarian soil and could prevent the country's democratic transformation after the liberation. However, it was not at all indifferent whether the country decided to side with the Allied Forces in the last minute, thus making war and the terrible destruction accompanying it shorter, or whether they remained on the side of the Nazis. The key to this question deciding the fate of the Hungarian people, however, was "still held by the ruling class, first of all the military leaders", for the anti-fascist forces of the Hungarian people were unable to enforce their intents. The ruling class had one last chance to atone its crimes committed in the past 25 years if, it decided to fight the final battle against fascism *together* with, and not *against* the masses of workers. The authors of the memorandum made no secret of the fact that they wanted to establish a democratic regime. Cooperation with the Governor was to be feasible and efficient only if the Head of State was ready to acknowledge that after the Nazis had been driven out and the country had changed sides, "the

democratic transformation of the country . . . would be put on the agenda without delay" and if he took the necessary measures for the breakaway in view of these.

After all, the memorandum urged measures which might provoke the activity of the Hungarian workers and peasants. The majority of the proposals for the measures were identical with those included in the first memorandum. However, it contained one new demand that could considerably improve the internal conditions of a breakaway, and that was the arming of Hungarian workers based on the experience of Paris.

The talks between Chief of Staff Vörös and the leaders of the Hungarian Front were expected mainly by the latter group. The leaders of the Communist Party postponed to blow up the statue of Gyula Gömbös (the Prime Minister who had established close links between Nazi Germany and Hungary) presumably in the hope of a favourable outcome of the talks (an action originally planned for the end of September).

The talks took place in the Castle district. Szakasits and Tildy announced the standpoint of the Hungarian Front, and then the participants discussed the military situation jointly. The Chief of Staff admitted that, from the point of view of the country, war against Russia was an irresponsible move—as can be read in an article written by Árpád Szakasits a few months later. János Vörös pointed to the mounting difficulties in the way of a breakaway, especially to the unreliability of the General Staff. At the same time, he mentioned that, "in order to bring about an armistice, . . . steps had been taken not only in the diplomatic but in the military sphere, too". According to memoirs, the Chief of Staff thought it possible to arm some five thousand workers. Vörös finally voiced the view that "at least another three weeks were needed to bring proper military measures to support the success of the request for an armistice". In the end Tildy and Szakasits urged quick measures and the maintenance of close contacts. According to some sources, certain contacts were actually maintained after the talks. After the discussion (and according to certain sources, before them as well) Imre Kovács and—on behalf of the Communist Party, for the first time,—László Rajk paid a visit to Újszász. "Talks took place in a very tough and strained atmosphere, and Rajk declared that a clear situation had to be established within days, otherwise the country would perish", wrote Szakasits. According to Újszász, at this negotiation Rajk handed over to him the second memorandum addressed to the Governor, which he sent to Gyula Ambrózy and General Lázár. At the talks, Rajk demanded a firm stand on the issue of the arming of the workers and urged direct talks and joint, immediate action with Lázár and especially with Horthy. Újszász agreed on the demands and promised to pass them on. However, Horthy's answer was still overdue.

At that time the Hungarian Front had links with very many resistance groups. The first steps were taken in order to coordinate tasks. The Military Committee of the Communist Party established relations with the military groups of bourgeois resistance one after the other; thus, for example, with Colonel Jenő Nagy, who later took on an important role in the organization of the military staff of the resistance. Several memoirs refer to the fact that people of the Hungarian Front, and local

groups of the organization could be found in several factories, ministries, military offices, and public offices. Factories and workplaces where weapons promised by Horthy and those around him should have been sent to were appointed. They also tried to ensure technical and personal conditions. There were communists who were given the task of arranging possibilities for storing a bigger amount of arms and ammunition. Preparatory talks for the distribution of arms were going on at the Construction Ironworkers' Unions, in the Ganz Shipyard, at the Gamma. Left-wing workers' leaders of several factories held illegal meetings to discuss tasks related to armed preparation.

At the time of the talks with the ruling circles and with various groups of bourgeois resistance, the participants of the Hungarian Front had to re-consider from time to time its relationship with the Communist Party and the issue of the future social structure of the emerging Hungary. The fear and anxiety of the ruling groups was increased by the fact that Hungary would be liberated by the Red Army and that could make it possible for the Communist Party to step immediately on the road of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The communists saw the fear of their partners and knew very well that the anti-German bourgeois and petty-bourgeois layers chased the rainbow of a bourgeois democracy similar to that existing in the Scandinavian states, in Switzerland and especially in the United States and Britain, and that these dreams held them back from closer cooperation with the working masses. This democracy was not identical with the people's democracy announced in the program of the Communist Party. It was to be implemented not by relying on the masses but with their exclusion. So the Communist Party was of the opinion that the final program approved by the Hungarian Front, too, should clarify the tasks of the democratic forces. This step would have a great mobilizing force not only for post-war cooperation, but also in everyday struggle. The draft program composed by László Rajk and Gyula Kállai summing up the tasks of democratic transformation in 17 points was supposed to fulfil this aim. In it the Communist Party clearly pointed out that the democratic Hungary to be reborn "wants to rely on the working class and the peasantry, the two democratic classes comprising the majority of the Hungarian people as well as on all the working layers of Hungarian society (craftsmen, intellectuals, etc.)". In this document of great importance, the Communist Party drew up the tasks of the worker-peasant democratic dictatorship.

The draft was discussed and approved by the Central Committee of the Communist Party suggesting that it should be submitted for affirmation and approval to the Executive Committee of the Hungarian Front. This was also meant to prove that communists did not consider alliance with the real democratic forces a transitional tactical manoeuvre, nor a relationship without principles, but a genuine cooperation forged for a longer period of time. However, stormily developing events frustrated ideas attached to the draft program and they failed to submit the document to the Executive Committee of the Hungarian Front.

Since Horthy still did not answer the memorandum of the Hungarian Front, the Central Committee of the Communist Party ordered the Military Committee to

organize the blowing up of the Gömbös statue. After careful preparation, on October 6, the Marót group blew up the marble statue at the Buda abutment of Elisabeth bridge. The following day fascist newspapers wrote in astonishment and anger about the "attempt". Those who did not hear the detonation of the explosion heard the signal for armed struggle by the communists transmitted by fascist propaganda rearing woundedly. Communist partisan action groups increased the number of explosions of military vehicles. Bourgeois resistance also joined the leaflet-propaganda campaign calling for resistance, demonstrations, and explosions. This was a response to the spreading of illegal leaflets by the Arrow Cross. Slogans mobilizing for struggle covered the walls of houses and factories all over Budapest. To end the "leaflet-war", the government issued a measure envisaging death sentence to the distributors, those who carry the leaflets, take them up in the street or pass them on. Naturally, the punishment meant a blow only to the Left.

The extraordinary deterioration of the military situation, the events taking place on October 8 and October 10, compelled Horthy to take his decision. He was finally compelled to acknowledge that the Germans and the Arrow Cross suspected the preparations for a breakaway and prepared to remove Lakatos (if necessary, even Horthy), for helping the extremist Arrow-Cross groups to power. In September, 1944, there began the political and military organization of an extremist right-wing putsch. The Nazis, together with the rest of all the Right, wanted to hinder the breakaway with or without a constitutional comedy. They began to arm the Arrow Cross and set out to mobilize the Comrade Alliance of the Eastern Front militarily. In order to establish a right-wing coalition, to unite the right wing of the Parliament and for the sake of constitutional appearances, a *Törvényhozók Nemzeti Szövetsége* (National Alliance of Legislators) was set up. In the first days of October, about 130 MPs indicated that they agreed with the setting up of the alliance. This, however, was not yet the majority in Parliament, later their number even decreased, but it was still appalling that in the autumn of 1944 there were still so many MPs who believed in the military victory of German fascism.

Seeing concrete organization, the government confined itself to warn the President of the Party of Hungarian Life of the anti-Governor and anti-government tendencies manifesting themselves in the National Alliance of Legislators. On October 7 the Eastern Front-Line Alliance of Brother-in-Arms was banned, but it continued preparations illegally.

There were other signs indicating the preparation of the Right and the Nazis. A part of the military aid promised by the German General Staff arrived, but it was unloaded in Budapest, instead of being taken to the front. It was also a suspicious circumstance that, instead of reliable units ordered to Budapest, unreliable troops arrived because of the breakaway. Otto Skorzeny, who released Mussolini, SS Obergruppenführer Bach-Zelewski and SS leader Heinz Reinefarth (one of the Nazi commanders who strangled the Warsaw uprising), arrived to Budapest. They all came with adequate military escort. That is, the Germans were preparing very well; the only disturbing circumstance was that they ignored the exact time of the breakaway. Therefore, they decided to anticipate the events. As a first step, on

October 8, with the assistance of Arrow-Cross men they kidnapped General Szilárd Bakay, a confidant of Horthy, who had been entrusted by the Governor with the military defence of the capital and with the preparation of the breakaway.

This was one of the reasons why Horthy decided to start talks with the representatives of the Hungarian Front. The other reason was the conclusion of the armistice talks in Moscow. On October 10, Horthy accepted the conditions of the Allied Forces and announced on the secret radio of the Castle that he was going to send a written authorization for signing the armistice agreement. As a third reason, we have to mention that the surroundings of the Governor still could not form an exact picture of the left-wing forces and their aims. So they thought that Horthy's "personal charm" and a high-level meeting would be successful from that point of view as well. They also made a last attempt to turn the majority of the Hungarian Front against the communists. Therefore, Horthy was willing to negotiate only with Tildy and Szakasits, excluding representatives of the Communist Party.

On the evening of October 11, the Governor received the representatives of the Hungarian Front, Árpád Szakasits and Zoltán Tildy, in the Castle. The delegates pointed out that their viewpoint was identical with that included in the memorandum sent to the Governor. Horthy declared that his decision, too, was final. Armistice talks "entered the final stage and could be announced within a week, maybe even sooner. . . . He judged prospects favourable." During the talks, Horthy dwelt at length upon the harmful consequences of a large-scale land reform. Tildy and Szakasits left Horthy's argument without any answer, and directed conversation repeatedly to the conditions for a breakaway and to cooperation. Finally they agreed, in principle, to arm the reliable elements of the workers. The leaders of the Hungarian Front were to be informed about the handing over of the weapons later. They also agreed that, on October 17, the Hungarian Front would declare general strike, as a signal announcing that "the changing of sides has started."

The talks were either preceeded or followed (memoirs contradict one another) by a meeting between László Rajk and General Lázár. Here the main issue was the arming of the workers. Memoirs reveal that Lázár failed to give a definite answer. Thus, despite several talks and promises, the issue of arming the workers and handing over the arms remained unclarified. It is also known that the Hungarian Front was informed several times to be present at a given address because of talks on the military tasks of the breakaway or the handing over of the arms. A few people attended such talks but with no result. Others were afraid of provocation and stayed away. The Office for Breakaway established relations through bourgeois groups with a few Serbian forced labour camp units working in the factories in the outskirts, too. They promised them arms, too, and tried to involve them in the preparations of the breakaway.

Thus, the talks brought no agreement as to the common tasks. The feeling of insecurity did not end, but rather increased. In this grave situation the Communist Party urged with every might and main the arming of the workers and the preparation of the general strike. In close cooperation with left-wing leaders of the

Social Democratic Party, through the illegal groups and through trade union activists—who, despite the protest of Kabók and those around him, were ready to take part in this work—the mobilization of the factories began. Left-wing factory activists discussed the tasks of taking over the arms and preparing the general strike at illegal meetings. The communists insisted on establishing direct links with various military units and garrison troops to obtain arms, because of the uncertainty of the agreement with Horthy. The party issued two leaflets of the tasks. One was addressed to the army in the name of the Hungarian Front, the other to the people of Budapest. “Do not wait for the initiatives of a manœuvring government which only considers its own interests and wants to lengthen its reign at all expenses”—read the appeal addressed to the officers of the army. “Be ahead of the events; accelerate the unavoidable process.” The leaflet emphasized the demand to open the frontline for the Red Army, and to arm the workers and the peasants in the hinterland.

The other leaflet addressed to the population of Budapest was prepared only on October 15, due to the delays concerning the breakaway, the handing over of the arms and also certain technical reasons. Because of the events, distribution did not take place. This leaflet warned of the danger that might come because of Horthy’s attitude; but it also announced a general strike for October 17 in accordance with the agreement with Horthy.

Communist exiles living in the Soviet Union also did a lot to ease the break with Hitler, and contributed to the success of changing side as far as they could. The exiles increased their efforts under the guidance of the Moscow Committee in three directions: in the field of propaganda, partisan struggle, and the preparation of direct military aid in order to solve the armistice successfully.

Both Radio Kossuth and front propaganda followed two directions. They revealed the manœuvres of Horthy and the Lakatos government; their unilateral exploration of peace conditions; the new upswing of the policy of waiting out, “being late”. Public opinion was informed on several occasions of the attempts to negotiate in Switzerland and Britain by former ambassadors. They warned of a Nazi putsch under way, too. They clearly stated that the Hungarian government and Horthy had to settle their relation with the Allies and especially the Soviet Union once and for all; they had to ask the Allies and first of all the Soviet Union for peace. “‘Orientation’ towards *Britain* and the *United States* is in vain so long as one is reluctant to clear matters regarding Russia”—Radio Kossuth insisted. “After all, it is not the American–British, but the Russian Army that is standing at the border. . . . If we wish to make peace with the Allied Forces, the first step to be taken is to ask Russia an armistice. This can by no means be avoided.” One of the broadcasts scoured anti-Nazi groups wishing to settle Hungary’s relationship with the Allied Forces *in general* and not primarily with the Soviet Union, and were hoping that “British–American mediation may prevent somehow that the Red Army enter Hungary. It is to be accepted that the Russian Army will penetrate the country anyway, with or without our support. The consequences, however, will not be the same at all.” Their attitude towards the Hungarian people, towards Hungary

depends on “our attitude towards them, that is . . . towards the Germans and their Hungarian servants”.

The other line of propaganda put the emphasis on concrete tasks, on the mobilization of workers. They urged to set up defence committees, armed action groups at every factory and workplace. They urged to set up national committees in the villages and towns involving every patriot. First these committees were to be the local bodies of anti-Nazi struggle, and later they were to become the organs of the emerging new power. In agreement with the Hungarian Front, they demanded the establishment of a government dedicated to “peace and to saving the country”, in which, beside Horthy and the government, those too, were to be represented who were ready to fight the Nazis. Its backbone, however, was to be made up of democratic forces and the representatives of the army.

By August 1944, the training of Hungarian partisans who were supposed to be put in action in their country was completed or was coming to an end. From that time on, 10 partisan-organizing groups were launched to Hungary or to neighbouring Slovakia to establish the conditions for a comprehensive Hungarian partisan movement. Partisan organizing groups arrived to the appointed districts one after the other under the leadership of Gyula Uszta, Pál Szőnyi, István Dékán, Zoltán Grubics, József Fábri, Sándor Nógrádi, etc.

Understandably enough, work carried out in the army was very important for the armistice that was to be concluded at any moment. We have already mentioned that in July and August 1944, some ten thousand Hungarian POWs were held in the direct vicinity of the front. Communists working among them considered it their main task to win the support of the POWs, especially that of the officers, and to set up a Hungarian legion. Work among the POWs brought positive results within weeks. At one of the meetings of the POWs, Captain Mihály Gyulai, former commander of the First Battalion of the 48th Infantry Regiment volunteered with his whole unit to fight against the Germans. After his brave action some four hundred officers followed his example. The Military Council of the 4th Ukrainian Front accepted the Hungarian initiative with goodwill, but was of the opinion that it would be best to win the whole of the 1st Hungarian Army over and turn it against the Germans. That is how the memorandum of Hungarian POW officers addressed to Béla Miklós, the Commander of the 1st Army was drawn on September 16, 1944. Let us quote from the interesting document: “Soldiers are addressing now their former superiors. . . . Hungary has been driven to the edge of final destruction, but is not lost yet. . . . The fate of Hungary is in the hands of the 1st Hungarian Army!” In the closing part of the letter they expressed their hope that Béla Miklós and his soldiers would “understand the commanding word of the times”, “stop fighting against the Russians”, and turn their weapons against the Germans.

A three-member delegation was elected by the officers to get the memorandum through: Major Emil Gallay, Captain Mihály Gyulai and Ensign Pál Neuberger. Prior to their departure, the commanders of the 4th Ukrainian Front received the Hungarian officers and declared that “whatever is requested by the Commander of the 1st Hungarian Army, be it an armoured division, an air division, engineering

corps or artillery, will be granted . . . so that he might start the attack against the Germans”.

After thorough preparation, the delegation crossed the frontline on September 24. First they were received by Brigadier General József Vasváry, who then conducted the delegation to Huszt, the general headquarters of Béla Miklós. Simultaneously with the delegation, another fifty soldiers trained at the anti-fascist school of the front and led by two officers also crossed the front to inform officers and soldiers about the content of the memorandum. At the same time, leaflets were thrown over the positions of the 1st Army, to inform the soldiers of the tasks of the delegation. There was hope that the delegation would reach not only Béla Miklós but would get to Budapest as well, for its leader, Gallay, knew Lakatos personally and promised to do his best to be able to talk to the Prime Minister.

At Huszt, the delegation was received by Béla Miklós who got in touch with Horthy at once. Two members of the delegation stayed behind, while Gyulai returned on September 28 with a verbal promise by Colonel-General Miklós who got in touch with Horthy at once. Two members of the delegation stayed behind, while Gyulai returned on September 28 with a verbal promise by Colonel-General Miklós that Horthy was ready to accept Moscow's offer, and the 1st Hungarian Army would prepare the change-over. He also said that “he [Miklós] would shortly answer the proposal of the patriotic officers”, too.

The positive answer made it possible to prepare the plan of cooperation and joint action on both sides. Béla Illés, the Hungarian communist officer attached to the 4th Ukrainian Front mentioned that both army commanders, Petrov and Miklós, reckoned with the possibility that Horthy might publish the request for the armistice at the 1st Hungarian Army. Kéry, Chief of Staff of the 1st Army, as well as Gyulai and Béla Illés, wrote that plans were mailed from both sides but unfortunately they did not arrive to the army headquarters. It is only if we also add that Horthy received Béla Miklós on October 11, and that during their talks they most probably touched upon the initiatives of the POW officers and the 4th Ukrainian Front that we can really understand the significance of the initiative.

Fully aware of the above, Radio Kossuth called for general strikes, armed uprisings, autonomous action by the people and the army, and the removal of the Horthy clique, impotent and eternally hesitating in both its general and special programs, from the beginning of October on. “The clock stroke twelve”: the intervention of the Germans and their satellites was only a question of days or hours. And if there will be no power daring to act firmly, the struggle of the hesitating Horthy and those around him and the German hirelings will certainly end with the latter gaining the upper hand.

That is, Horthy was warned about the Nazi danger by several circumstances, but he could see several encouraging signs on the opposite side, too. Therefore, if the proper military measures had been taken, the country could have looked forward to a successful break with the Nazis with some hope.

What did Horthy decide to do and how did he prepare for it?

It the evening of October 11, after the Governor had accepted the conditions for the armistice (though his written authorization has not arrived yet), Faraghó signed the agreement on the cease-fire in the Kremlin in the presence of Molotov. Horthy obliged himself to evacuate the territories gained after 1937, and to break with and turn against Nazi Germany, and the Soviet government “was ready to help him with its troops”.

The military measures taken for changing sides seemed to be adequate. Already on October 10, Horthy appointed Lieutenant General Béla Aggteleky to the post of Bakay to ensure the security of Budapest. General Lázár was in charge of the defence of the Castle; Kálmán Hardy, the commander of the river forces, was entrusted with the defence of the Castle and the bridges of the Danube; General Ferenc Farkas of the 1st Army—picked out by Horthy for the post of prime minister in case Lakatos refused the cease-fire—was given an order to transport the 10th division to Budapest. (The General actually presented himself to Horthy on October 14, but the outposts of the division only reached Hatvan by October 15.) On October 11, Horthy received, in the company of Antal Vattay, Béla Miklós, and according to certain reports Lajos Veress, the commander of the 2nd Army as well, and informed them of the preparations of the breakaway. Both commanders undertook the task of turning their units against the Germans and getting in touch with the Soviets, on hearing the prearranged slogan (“My 1920 III/1 order is to be completed”). To involve the commander of the 3rd Army, General Heszlényi, known for his pro-German sentiments, was out of question. However, after the discussion, they did not take the necessary steps to prepare the two armies. The Chiefs of Staff of the armies were suspecting rather than knowing what was going on, so they did not know exactly what their tasks were.

On October 13 both army headquarters received notice from Chief of Staff János Vörös that he wanted to discuss what was to be done with the army commanders and their Chiefs of Staff at Szatmárnémeti on the 14th. When they were just about to start—wrote Kálmán Kéry—a new order came that the discussion has been cancelled. Thus, on October 14, i.e. on the eve of the cease-fire, still nobody knew for certain what was to be done! They did not know when the cease-fire was to be proclaimed, or what political steps could be expected to accompany the military ones. Nothing was done with regard to the arming of the workers apart from the uncertain promises mentioned earlier. Because of Horthy's promise, the Hungarian Front, the other resistance groups and the trade unions were preparing for the 17th and 18th of October, and all their measures concentrated on these dates.

In the evening of October 14, Horthy informed Prime Minister Lakatos (who ignored the preparations completely) and five reliable ministers invited to the Castle that he would ask for an armistice and would convene the Privy Council for the next day. The unexpected information astonished the Prime Minister and the ministers. They questioned Vattay first of all about the military preparations of the cease-fire. In his confession, Vattay wrote the following about his answer to Lakatos: “We counted on the fact that we shall have to fight the Germans, and in this fight we can make better use of our local knowledge . . . and the large masses of the workers are

on our side." Then the ministers argued about the conditions of the cease-fire, since Horthy failed to inform them even about the fact that the agreement had already been signed.

However, the events taking place before the October 15 meeting of the Privy Council and the armistice proclamation, decided the fate of the uncertain and unprepared breakaway once and for all, compelling to inactivity all the political and military forces privy to the planned breakaway, waiting uncertainly as to what to do. On October 15, the Nazis and the Arrow Cross, ignoring the exact date of the cease-fire, decided to take over the initiative.

The Gestapo used the Yugoslav contacts of Horthy Jr—of which nothing has been learned for certain up to the present day—to trap and arrest him in the morning of October 15. Almost simultaneously with that move, Wehrmacht Chief of Staff Guderian submitted a twelve-hour ultimatum to Chief of Staff János Vörös, in which he demanded that Vörös cancel the order he had given a few hours before to withdraw the Hungarian troops from the front line. His son kidnapped, the Governor was virtually a prisoner of the Germans, and at the decisive moment, the hesitating Vörös also backed down.

Meanwhile, the Privy Council met, but even in these fatal hours they were arguing only about Horthy's right to request a cease-fire when a decision to this effect could only be adopted by Parliament. During the session of the Privy Council, Horthy received Veessenmayer and German Ambassador Rahn; he then returned to the session and accepted the resignation of the government, only to appoint them again without even changing the composition of the body. Meanwhile, although the government ignored most of what was going on, at 13 o'clock the radio broadcast the Governor's proclamation. The unprecedented irresponsibility reflected by the preparation was matched only by the terribly tragical consequences. Within a few hours, the Germans and the Arrow Cross turned the events to their own use.

After lengthy wrangling, and with the active cooperation of his Prime Minister, Horthy finally accepted the conditions set by the Nazis. On October 16, in return for his and his family's security, he resigned from his post as Head of State to the benefit of Arrow-Cross leader Ferenc Szálasi. His downfall befitted the 25-year era stamped by his name. The dirt and blood sticking to his obtaining and keeping the post of Head of State was multiplied by his last step and its consequences.

The proclamation took the resistance forces, absorbed in feverish preparation, completely by surprise. The leaders of the Hungarian Front were conferring in the Castle district, at Ilona street, when the proclamation was announced. They were angry and could do nothing; they did not even know what exactly had happened. Later, when it had become evident that events took an unfavourable turn, Szakasits sent a letter to the ironworkers' courier, calling on the trade union leaders to declare general strike. But the courier could not reach Pest. The confusion of the Hungarian Front was increased, the mobilization of the workers was hindered by another, seemingly unimportant circumstance: *the proclamation was read out on Sunday*, that is, the masses of factory workers could not be mobilized. Therefore, the

spontaneous actions of the workers were insignificant. This situation was well characterized by József Darvas in his book *Város az ingoványon* (Town on the Swamp): "I almost race along Nagykörút... 'Long live separate peace!'—I shout into the face of passers-by... Some of them shout with me with a kind of 'who-knows-maybe' expression on their face... And this 'who-knows-maybe' mood prevails: ... 'the true' people of Budapest are hesitant and insecure."

Dozens of memoirs witness the fact that workers, intellectuals and peasants met at the flats of well-known left-wing personalities to discuss what to do in the hours following the proclamation. Many discussed the possibilities of getting arms to support Horthy. Before, however, the uninformed people could recover their wits, events took a new turn. Many had to flee arrest. On October 15, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, released from prison that very morning, was visited by the representatives of various political groups who wanted to discuss what to do. By late evening, the situation had changed to such an extent, that Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and the delegates had to flee in order to escape an Arrow-Cross raid.

In a few large workers' centres, definite steps were taken to mobilize the workers. At Csepel, after the proclamation, on the initiative of the "Committee 13" a large group of workers marched to the workers' home. The participants of the demonstration tore off the sign board of the National Labour Centre, and demanded peace. They planned a strike for the day after, but the events that came next frustrated this step. The leaders of MOKAN at Miskolc sent an appeal to trade union groups at Miskolc and at Diósgyőr. In order to support the armistice, they wanted to halt production in the factories and planned a workers' demonstration. Workers on the factory rally on October 16 silenced the Arrow-Cross speaker and hailed Horthy. At Ózd, workers marched to the parish hall and demanded arms to support the armistice. The Communist Party's courier arrived from Tatabánya to Budapest to discuss the tasks so that the communists might join the actions if necessary. At the county town of Tolna, Szekszárd, a group prepared an armed uprising after the proclamation to enforce the armistice in the town. General Vattay mentioned that after the Governor's appeal, several organizations and groups assured Horthy of their support and asked for information as to what to do. Presumably not only Vattay but others, too, were visited. Vattay sent these people over to General Aggteleky, Commander of the Budapest garrison to learn the concrete tasks, but they were caught by the Arrow Cross, since after the proclamation Aggteleky was arrested and Arrow Cross General Zoltán Hindy took over the military command of Budapest. Left-wing preparation triggered by the arrangements for the armistice and the proclamation was well demonstrated by the statements by Foreign Minister Gustáv Hennyey explaining Horthy's step on October 15: "Events on October 15 set in motion the Budapest resistance organizations. These included the majority of workers, left-wing circles and those strata which considered the continuation of the war useless. The active stand of the workers took a serious form, and so clashes, and even civil war, were about to shape. This, however, had to be hindered at all costs."

After the proclamation, Radio Kossuth called on the nation, primarily the people of the capital being in the biggest danger, in a series of special broadcasts to avert a probable German attack. Radio Kossuth addressed the army especially, whose stand was decisive in these hours. "You must not wait for the order of your superiors. By the time the orders of Horthy or Vörös arrive, it would be too late. . . . The Budapest garrison, the 1st and 2nd Armies have to act immediately. . . ." The radio appreciated the importance of the Hungarian armistice. The Besztercebánya station of the Slovak National Uprising also called for struggle and cooperation. Similar calls were made on behalf of the Yugoslav partisans, too, who broadcast a special call to the Hungarian military command at Muraszombat to start immediate talks about the joint struggle.

After the proclamation, the countersign for the army to change sides was not issued; the majority of the staff denied their Supreme Commander, and Vörös was hesitating and then gave order to continue the struggle. All this paralyzed the armed forces and thus they could be taken over by the Arrow Cross. The Gestapo, the Nazi commandos and the Arrow Cross, together with the military units joining them, immediately occupied the Radio, the ministries, public buildings and garrison barracks. Officers resisting or hesitating were arrested. Although the defence of the Castle was ensured by the guards and the Budapest guard battalion until the morning of October 16—until Horthy's leave—the Danube Fleet as well as smaller units concentrated to Budapest for the defence of the capital took the side of the Nazis after the occupation of their headquarters. Some units held out all through the night of October 15, and even in the morning of October 16, but due to numerical superiority and treason, they had to give up fight finally.

On the front, Lajos Veress, Commander of the 2nd Army, was arrested by his own General Staff a few hours after the putsch. The Commander of the 1st Army, Béla Miklós, also proved incapable to act and to bring an autonomous decision on October 15. One day later, when he, too, was directly threatened with arrest, he went over to the Soviet Army together with a part of his staff, leaving his army to its fate. True, after this move he immediately called on his soldiers to follow his example and some ten thousands of them followed their Commander. Still, the significance of his deed is lessened by the fact that he fled historical responsibility, and thought only of himself in the most critical moment.

Thus, the attempt to turn against Hitler on October 15 failed, owing to the attitude of Horthy and those around him, the treason of the General Staff, the lack of organization and preparedness of the democratic forces, and the quick action of the Germans and the Arrow Cross.

October 15 might have been the overture of a mass movement embracing the whole country and of a successful breakaway. *In Hungary, where*, owing partly to a subjective factor, i.e. the low organizational level of the Left, and partly to the weakness of fighting value, *firm determination ought to have assured success in mobilizing the masses, the tide has turned.* As a consequence of Horthy's awkward step, the most negative forces of Hungarian history came to power. *The second interference of the Nazis changed power relations to the advantage of fascists.*

"Although Horthy and those around him admitted that to continue the war meant to murder the nation"—pointed out the Open Letter by the Central Committee of the Communist Party a few days after the putsch—"not even the universal interests of the Hungarian nation could break through their 25-year-old reactionary concept. Militarily, they wanted to lead the country out of the war, but politically they were afraid of the Red Army and of the democratic forces of the Hungarian people. They wanted to carry out their job by leaving the reorganization of the army undone and by excluding the Hungarian democratic forces. This was the reason behind the miserable collapse of their attempt."

Some say that Nazi military superiority would have put the breakaway down with ruthless violence anyway. True, according to certain data more than fifty German divisions were stationed on the front and in the hinterland in October 1944. We have already mentioned that the Nazis made special preparations in the capital to hinder the breakaway. The argument of superiority, however, is only partly true. At that time, the Hungarian troops were assembled in three armies and about nine reserve divisions, even though their armaments and the moral stand of the officers were hardly adequate for fighting the Germans. However, we should not leave aside the fact that the outposts of the Red Army were already at Kecskemét. The Soviet government had offered various kinds of help; if the Governor's decision were firm and unambiguous, he could have united the majority of the working masses. The failure of Horthy's step was, in the final analysis, due not to the superiority of the Germans, but to unpreparedness, a fear to turn their back on the past definitely. Therefore, the communists were right to state that "Szálasi's German hiring puppet government was raised to power not so much by the strength of German bayonets, but by the 'Szeged' policy pursued by Horthy." In Hungary—in contrast to Romania and Bulgaria—there still existed the possibility of an extreme right-wing turn. Hitler, learning the lesson of the series of "conversions" performed by his former allies, was especially well prepared to hinder the breakaway here; unpreparedness, hesitation, irresolution and "political considerations" could only lead to historic tragedy.

Although the main responsibility lies with Horthy and his clique, we would only get to half-truths if we said nothing of the responsibility and missions of the anti-fascist forces. In Hungary, the proper organization of the masses, their readiness to fight were missing. Naturally, people were longing for peace, but their mobilization would have required nation-wide action to give them an impetus to overcome their apathy and realize the extent of their own power. If Horthy or another prominent leader of the Hungarian ruling classes had undertaken—after adequate preparation—to pursue the policy of the Hungarian Front, October 15 could have become a turning point of Hungarian history. Moreover, Horthy and his clique were well aware of this fact; the failure of their attempt is to be judged accordingly. The illusions described above explain why, in the period of the preparation of the breakaway, the anti-Nazi bourgeois groups, and even the Hungarian Front, spent more time on negotiating with Horthy than on preparing the masses.

That way, the helm of agonizing Hungarian fascism was "legally" taken over by the Arrow Cross, the last, uninhibited servant of the Nazis in the fatal days of October.

VI. 2. The Communist Party's Struggle for the Unfolding of a General National Resistance The Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising

On 16 October, after the wretched failure of his attempt to breakaway, Horthy resigned from his office and from "all the legal rights related to the power of the Governor". He also announced that he charged Ferenc Szálasi to form "the government of national union". Thus all "constitutional difficulties" were removed from the way of the take-over. The protraction of this "constitutional act", however, refrained neither the Germans nor the Arrow Cross from publishing in the evening hours of 15 October the appeal elaborated by Szálasi weeks earlier, together with the "proclamation" of the Hungarist Movement of the Arrow Cross Party, and the manifesto of the Eastern Front-Line Alliance of Brother-in-Arms.

"... we dare state and will enforce our principle—the proclamation of the Arrow Cross Party reads—that we consider even mere existence far too much for those who evade the demands of the life-and-death struggle of our nation, or endeavour to do so. Those who are not with us, with our nation, today, are against us. These people, however, are to perish." These were the words inaugurating Arrow-Cross terror lasting for several months. While hell broke loose in the streets, in the "upper regions" the dreams Szálasi and the Arrow-Cross leaders had nourished for decades, i.e. their inauguration into the highest ranks of dignity in Hungary, had come true. Ferenc Szálasi became Prime Minister authorized with the jurisdictions of Governor. As the bearer of the highest dignity, he established the governing council on 16 October, and almost simultaneously appointed his government, consisting mostly of his own men and some members of the Imrédy Party, which could also boast of three former ministers of the Horthy war cabinet: Béla Jurcsek, Lajos Szász and Lajos Reményi-Schneller. New commanders were appointed to head the 1st and 2nd Armies. Szálasi was not niggardly with offices; dozens of his supporters became government commissioners, lord lieutenants, chief constables and other officials.

On November 3, the National Alliance of Legislators was convened to adopt the decree of the "national leader" and to elect Szálasi national leader by acclamation. The session also established the National Alliance of the Upper House, and that, too, accepted Szálasi as leader.

Arrow-Cross administration, brought about with Nazi assistance and maintaining the appearance of constitutionality, set out to organize the total mobilization of the country with all speed and to exterminate the Hungarian people, undertaking the role of Nazi rear-guard. This work was determined by the document entitled "The Plan for the Reconstruction of the Country", adopted by the government at

its session on 17 October. The plan summarized with laconic concision the tasks of each and every ministry. The Ministry of Home Affairs was to carry out relentless struggle against the "internal and external enemy", while the Ministry of National Defence was to establish full harmony between the Hungarian and German armed forces. According to the plans of the agricultural and industrial portfolios, the peasant was to produce, while the worker was obliged to manufacture all the industrial goods necessary for the continuation of the war. The task of the new ministry in charge of the total mobilization of the nation was "the total mobilization of peasants, workers, intellectuals, the women and the youth". Those who attempted to sabotage the program of national reconstruction in any way "were to pay with their lives".

Thus, terror and massacre became the main means of Arrow Cross "order-making". After 15 October they simply eliminated all who refused to fulfil the Arrow-Cross demands; who refused to take the "Szálasi oath" either in the army or in the state apparatus. They eliminated those who on 15 October or later acted in accordance with the spirit of the Horthy appeal and could not find refuge. Their former opponents, members of the ruling classes, several ministers, generals, lord lieutenants, state secretaries and former Prime Minister Kállay himself were jailed or interned. The most ruthless hunt was, of course, carried out for the communists, the organized workers, and their functionaries, i.e. the anti-fascists. On 15 October and the day after, most anti-fascists were captured by the Arrow Cross, especially in the countryside. After 16 October, the pursuit was directed mainly at those who, in the critical days,—to use the words of the Chief of Staff—"forgot their oaths and left their divisions and offices arbitrarily".

The government and the Arrow Cross "brothers" in the capital mobilized a large-scale apparatus to settle once and for all the "Jewish question" left unresolved in the summer. On 16 October the 1st Army Corps Headquarters of Budapest issued a decree promising reprisals also against Christians who used to be or were in closer contact with Jews. Jews between the ages of 16 and 60 were compelled to forced labour service, and on this pretext they were partly transported from Budapest. Those who were gathered were crowded into brick-yards in the vicinity of Budapest, and in November they were sent off to Germany on foot, on three different routes, in groups of six thousand each day.

On 4 December, Minister of Home Affairs Gábor Vajna ordered the resettlement of "Jews still at large" in the capital into the ghetto set up in the 7th district. In a few days, 18 000 Christian residents were moved out from this district to be replaced by 65 000–70 000 Jews. The situation of the Jews confined to the ghetto was horrible beyond all belief. They had practically no food. Hunger, epidemics, the bombings and the regular terrorist actions of the Arrow Cross killed thousands of them. However, their planned deportation to Germany was prevented by the fact that, at end-December, the Soviet forces had besieged the capital. The liberation of the capital saved those confined to the ghetto from certain death.

At the beginning of November, the Arrow Cross began to gather all their political prisoners crowded into the different prisons and internment camps to the Csillag

Fortress of Komárom. From Komárom they were transported in mass to Nazi concentration camps, where very many of them became the victims of hunger, epidemics, or the Nazis.

Immediately after 15 October, the Germans demanded to intensify production in plants of key military significance. The Arrow Cross fulfilled the wish of the "great ally" servilely in this respect, too. Already on 16 October the military commanders of the war factories were ordered to intensify production to the maximum. Party representatives were appointed next to company managers and military commanders. Their task was the local implementation of the program of "country building". In order to bring to obedience the perturbers, saboteurs and slackers, a resolution was adopted at a joint meeting of the commanders of personnel in war factories and the managers of companies on 9 November, which prescribed execution by shooting in more serious cases in order to "set an example".

In November the successful attacks of the Red Army made it ever more clear to the Nazis that production in the remaining territories was only of secondary importance for them; it was far more important to transport Hungary's valuable machines, stocks of raw materials and whatever could be moved to Germany. Already before 15 October, endangered plants had been resettled to Transdanubia, but now the responsables were considering the possibility of re-settling them abroad. Speaking of this measure threatening with the paralysis of Hungarian economy, the responsible Arrow-Cross government commissioner said: "The fruits of this noble task will be felt and blessed not only by the Hungarians of today, but also by the generations of the eternal national future". Only the difficulties of transportation, the resistance of the Hungarian people and especially the speedy progress of the Red Army hindered the plan that (with Szálasi's words) Germany should provide "asylum" to all movable Hungarian values. According to a far-from-complete assessment made in 1945, nearly 100 000 transport vehicles (60 000 motor vehicles, 36 000 railway carriages, including 1 260 engines, more than 200 river boats) and the most valuable equipments of 415 large and medium-size industrial plants were transported to Germany. Kurt Becher himself, the Nazi leader of the evacuation program, estimated in his notes written after 1945 the amount of factory equipment taken out of the country to have been around 800 wagon-loads and 30 river barge-loads. Vast amounts of art treasures, gold, silver, jewelry, the stocks of the State Mint and the National Bank of pure gold, bullions and platinum were taken to the West. The majority of the animal stock, as well as a large portion of the agricultural crop were also dragged away. Nearly half of the agricultural damage (estimated to be c. 3.7 thousand million gold Pengős), was caused by the loss of the animal stock. Of that, approximately 50 per cent was the damage caused by the produce, and 14 per cent by the animal stock dragged away to Germany. According to a post-1945 assessment, a total of 570 river-barge-loads (135 000 tons) and 60 000 wagon-loads of products and raw materials were shipped out of the country. No data is available as to the amount of products taken away on road. There are not even estimations as to the total value of goods removed from the country.

When the transportation of factory and other valuables was ordered, the plants also received the plans of how to paralyze and blow up the plants. These actions had to be prepared so that on receiving the orders of the German or Hungarian military commands they could be implemented within 24 hours. These actions were aimed at causing such a degree of damage in the machines and equipment remaining in the plants that would have prevented the starting of production for another six months. They also caused tremendous damage to the country, despite the fact that, in several places, the workers managed to prevent destruction or to decrease its effect. Still, the damage was of immeasurable proportions everywhere, for the fascists not only ruined the plants, but also ordered the undermining and blowing up of public buildings, bridges, the main railway junctions. On 4 November, Margaret Bridge, crammed with people and vehicles in the rush-hour traffic, was blown up. During the siege of the city all the Danube bridges met with the same end.

When the frontline moved closer, to the order of paralyzing the factories was added the "forced evacuation" of the population from areas considered dangerous.

The Arrow-Cross government serving German fascism set out to utilize the human reserves of the country to their utmost. Already in October, all reserves, as well as all males not in military service for some other reason, born between 1896 and 1923, were forced to join up, while in November all members of the paramilitary youth organization born in 1924, 1925 and 1926 were also joined up. The only exceptions were males working on military jobs or in war factories. As the last hours of Arrow-Cross rule and of the total liberation of Hungary neared, so was the number of drafted generations increased. By the end of 1944, even the 17-year-old were drafted, and in January 1945 the deputy-lieutenant of Somogy County had all males join up between the ages of 15 and 48 with "little exemption". In addition, different Nazi-type voluntary "élite" forces were also set up. That is how the Saint Ladislaus division, the Hunyadi SS Armoured Division, the Hungarist Legion and other similar units were established.

The National Guards, set up by the Lakatos government to hinder left-wing actions, to fight partisan activities and to safeguard rest and order, was reorganized at the beginning of November by the Arrow-Cross government, on the pretext that it was unreliable. Even its name was changed to Auxiliary Detachment Units. However, the reorganization failed to bring the expected results, because in many places, especially in the capital, these units became legal cover organizations for the resistance and gave refuge for the persecuted. The implementation of the regulations obliging all civilians between the ages of 14 and 70 to undertake forced labour on the pretext of defence and entrenchment jobs was not much more successful either.

At first, the Arrow Cross varied terror and demagoguery, hanging and propaganda meetings. There was much talk about social equality and the "Hungarist Great Homeland".

However, as Arrow-Cross demagoguery became less and less effective, so did Arrow-Cross terrorism increase. A whole series of new terrorist units were organized. These included the "armed national service", the "party police service"

within the framework of the Arrow Cross Party, and the "field security service". The procedural regulations of the summary courts were simplified. The military commanders were given free hand to put to the sword on the spot soldiers who "acted cowardly", deserted or refused to obey orders. The National Reckoning Bench was set up as a supreme court; it could decide within its own sphere of authority on the clemency pleas of those sentenced to death. On 11 December, a joint German-Hungarian summary court was set up in Budapest whose decisions served as the basis for the execution of hundreds of those who disobeyed orders.

The fact that the plans of the Arrow Cross and the Nazis could not be realized fully was the result, among other things, of the increasing opposition of the Hungarian people, and the intensification of active and passive anti-fascist resistance.

After the Szálasi putsch, the centre organizing around Horthy and the Office for Breakaway, which also coordinated various illegal bourgeois groups, collapsed. Some of the participants of the preparations for breakaway joined Szálasi or left for Germany together with the Governor's company, while others were jailed in the convict prison at Margaret Boulevard, then at Sopronkőhida. Many of the members of the illegal groups were arrested. The Szent-Györgyi group was almost completely eliminated, together with its military section closely cooperating with the River Forces.

The trade unions, representing the greatest left-wing organized force, were not banned officially. However, their legal activity became totally impossible. Their remaining premises were occupied either by the Arrow Cross Party or by the military forces. Factory trade union leaders, shop stewards, and even the rank and file were arrested, dragged away, or at best permanently insulted if they did not run away, or if the workers' collectives did not defend them. The top leadership of the trade unions was shattered to pieces. Some of the leaders representing bourgeois groups at the preparations of the breakaway who after 15 October joined again the organization of the workers' resistance in some form were arrested, and several of them were murdered. On 16 October, the Arrow Cross shot dead Anna Koltói in front of her own door; she had started negotiations about the organization of armed resistance and the resumption of relations broken earlier already the day after the putsch. Lajos Kabók, the General Secretary in Charge of the Trade Union Council and Sándor Karácsony, Secretary of the Ironworkers' Union, were both arrested at the end of October or at the beginning of November. They both tacitly accepted the illegal organization that started to unfold within the Ironworkers' Union, and the sabotage of the Weiss Manfred factories was carried out with their consent, too. The sabotage was discovered at the beginning of November; several union leaders and a few members of the board of directors were dragged away from the factory, and the workers' collectives participating in the sabotage were caught by the Arrow Cross, because even after 15 October they still refused to understand that the only feasible solution was illegality and efficient cooperation with the resistance movement.

The relations between the parties of the Hungarian Front were also disarranged temporarily. The continuous work of the Executive Committee ceased and became

incidental. The organized network of resistance extending to an increasing field and embracing the different trends and organizations of the movement, just before the putsch, was loosened temporarily. In the weeks following the putsch, only the conditions of illegal work, the hiding of the persecuted and the settling of the ranks could be established. There was considerable uncertainty and despair. Many concentrated their efforts only on saving themselves or their groups; at the beginning only a very few believed in the possibility of armed resistance and dared to undertake its organization.

The leadership of the Communist Party was well aware of the fact that with 15 October, resistance reached a new stage. The possibility of breaking with the Nazis through an armed national uprising decreased. However, the party did not rule out the possibility of an uprising. Learning the lesson of the grave failure on 15 October, the Central Committee of the Communist Party urged the parties of the Hungarian Front *to establish the conditions for the organization of general national resistance*. It expressed its views in its Open Letter, too. The document pointed out that there were only two alternatives, either to continue cooperation with the Nazis, that is, to choose devastation—or national resistance, alliance with the Red Army, the road of the fight for freedom.

The party's appeal considered the planned preparation of Budapest's rescue to be of decisive importance. Therefore, the task was to set up resistance committees and defensive guards in the plants, so that the workers might be drawn into the sabotage of production, they might defend their machines and other values of the factories, prevent that valuables be carried away to Germany, and organize general strikes. The party and the workers had to find ways to establish contact with the forced labour units and all the armed and civilian units of the Szálasi puppet government, in order to paralyze their activities from within, so that they, too, could be used in the interest of resistance.

The Military Committee of the Communist Party intensified its endeavours in two closely interrelated fields: 1) The organization, arming and deployment of small action groups for actions against the Germans and the Arrow Cross. 2) The organization of an armed uprising.

The activity of the action guards was directed by Lajos Fehér, a member of the Military Committee. Two methods were applied for their formation and the determination of their manner of fighting and tasks. One was the organization of small, 3 to 6-member subversive groups suitable for partisan warfare in large cities. The other form was elaborated later, after the blockade of Budapest, when the smaller groups active mainly in the outskirts of the city were united and joined by military units. Thus larger, 40 to 50-strong military units were formed. Responsibility for the organization of these latter groups was placed on Károly Kiss; after their escape from the Margaret Boulevard prison, László Földes, György Nonn and others received similar assignments from the Central Committee. At first the activity of the partisan groups was mainly of a political and moral nature: they encouraged resistance, intensified the uncertainty within the Arrow-Cross camp and the state apparatus and speeded up collapse.

The other main tasks of the Military Committee was determined by György Pálffy as follows: "a) The organization of the masses of workers who could be mobilized by the Communist Party, [a move] which I directed through Antal Apró... and [Bertalan] Bartha, the leader of the ironworkers within the party; b) The organization of different resistance groups from various strata of society (university students, national guards, later the auxiliary detachment units, ministerial and other authority officials, reserve officers, etc.), their registration, information and supply with arms and materials; c) The organization of the different units of the army... All this organizational work was carried out within and in cooperation with the work of the Liberation Committee, established for this very purpose by the Hungarian Front."

After 15 October, Antal Apró organized armed preparation primarily among the construction workers. Military training was carried out at various places, including the cellar of the Construction Workers' Union's Headquarters at Aréna Street and at Bimbó Street in Buda. At one of the local offices of the Construction Workers' Union the leaders of the union gathered to discuss the preparation of the workers for an armed uprising. In the Ironworkers' Union an illegal communist group led by Bertalan Bartha prepared the workers of the war factories, mainly those in Angyalföld, the Ganz Shipyard, the Steyer Works, the Láng Machine Factory, the Hungarian Steel and the Philips Works. Preparations were made to obtain the stock of arms at MÁVAG factory and to arm the workers there. The implementation of this plan was hindered by arrests. At Csepel "Committee 13" organized the arming of the workers and the other forms of resistance. At Kispest, Pesterzsébet and Rákospalota similar committees were mobilizing the workers.

With regard to armed resistance, the communists considered it most important to infiltrate the so-called national guards units, and then, after their dismantling, the Auxiliary Detachment Units and the civil defence groups. They were ordered by the party to join the civilian armed organization of the Air Defence Auxiliary Detachment and the Auxiliary Detachment Units, and to work in these organizations so that by the time the orders came from the party, they could be used against the fascists. In fact, later on they became important bases for armed resistance.

The organization of the resistance in the countryside, and mainly in the mining centres, continued to be directed by the Central Miners' Committee of the Communist Party. After 15 October, the second edition of *Harcoló Bányász* was published in which the reasons for the failure of the breakaway were analyzed in detail. It called on miners to form groups and to prepare for general strike, and to establish directing-organizing committees in each mine or shaft. At that time there had already been many organizations at Salgótarján, and they even succeeded in contacting the partisans in the vicinity of Losonc. At end-October, the members of the Miners' Committee were arrested. Although this was a serious blow to resistance in the countryside, it could not crash it any more. Several miners in the Nógrád coal basin joined the Nógrádi partisan group that had arrived to the region at end-November, while many others joined the partisans in Slovakia. At

Karancsalja, on 23 November, three hundred miners barricaded themselves in one of the mine shafts, using their resistance to hinder the dragging away of the miners from the region. The Arrow Cross and the Nazis paid cruel revenge; several miners were killed, but they did not succeed in dragging away the miners. At Pécs and at the Tata coal basin resistance was limited to the protection of the mines, the cutting of telephone and other lines, and the sabotage of the evacuation. At Sárísáp and Dorog, the miner-partisan group formed by János Zgyerka disturbed the activities of the Arrow Cross and the Nazis for months, and provided important information for the Red Army.

The most successful provincial centre of resistance was in Borsod County, still under the direction of the MOKAN Committee. They organized the defence of the factories, hindered the evacuation and dragging-away of factory valuables, and in cooperation with one of the Miskolc national guards company, they conducted a series of successful actions against the fascist forces. They actively participated in the liberation of the town. Successful resistance was organized at the Ózd Metal Factory, in the factories at Sajószentpéter and elsewhere.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party assigned a significant role to communist youth in extending the resistance movement. When the 10 October meeting failed to reach an agreement on the establishment of joint communist-socialist organizations, the so-called Federation of Young Socialists, the CP decided to reorganize the communist youth organization. The preparations were made by László Orbán on behalf of the Central Committee of the party and by István Kende, Béla Koós and Miklós Weinberger representing the communist youth.

The militant program announcing the reorganization of the Young Communist League (*Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség*) was issued on 28 October. Of the immediate military tasks it gave most emphasis to the defence of Budapest. It stated that all YCL organizations were armed military guards at the same time, and if they wanted to be worthy of "the Spanish, Serbian, French and other fraternal organizations", they had to form young workers' militias. In conclusion, it called upon all strata of freedom fighting Hungarian youth to join their forces in work and struggle: "We offer a fraternal hand to all of you; we must establish the *militant front of the whole Hungarian youth*. All young people who are ready to fight for a free Hungary are our allies."

After the appeal, the central paper of the YCL, *Szabad Ifjúság* (Free Youth) was published. YCL addressed a great many pamphlets to the youth of the capital, urging them to join the resistance. The already existing youth action groups were widened; new ones were formed. They carried out significant activity in the workers' districts and the inner town of the capital, as well as in the different student hostels. Their number reached 350.

In addition to forming the armed guards, YCL leaders also worked on the establishment of a united youth front. As a first step, the Student Movement of National Resistance was formed in the summer of 1944; later on, this body organized the cooperation of the different student organizations as the student

section of the YCL. At end-October, with the cooperation of the Student Movement of National Resistance, the Freedom Front of Hungarian Students was established, and it was joined by groups of students at the Miskolc Horthy Hostel and the Serbian Hostel of the southern territory, by students of the economics and technical universities, and of the Academy for Fine Arts. The Relief Society of Art Students also cooperated with the student front, although they did not join it. The endeavours of the YCL and the Freedom Front of Hungarian Students to establish broader youth cooperation met with success in the second half of November 1944. The Freedom Front of Hungarian Youth was formed which, together with the YCL and the Student Front, also united the representatives of anti-Nazi groups with whom the communist youth had established contacts already at the beginning of the war. Some prominent representatives of the peasant youth (Youth of the National Peasant Party), the different clerical youth organizations (the Catholic Youth Federation, the Soli Deo Gloria of the Reformed Church and the Evangelical Luther Society) also joined. The joint youth organization then joined the Hungarian Front.

In its appeal issued on 22 November, 1944, the Freedom Front of Hungarian Youth called all Hungarian youth to armed resistance; as a result, resistance groups were formed one after the other, independently of the central direction. That is how the Red Brigade led by László Füredi and Ferenc Rónai was formed within the XIV/2 Auxiliary Detachment Company. Its members included communist and socialist youth, artists, deserters who had only indirect contacts with the Communist Party and the YCL. A similar group was the "Hungarian Freedom Movement" also known as Klotild Street group, led by Béla Stollár and Árpád Szakasits' son, György Szakasits. This group was in contact with the Kőbánya partisans. College students and young workers were to be found in the Görgey battalion, grouping nearly 120 anti-fascists. The progressive groups of university youth had played a considerable part in that, despite the endeavours of the government, the teachers and students of the universities and colleges, as well as the invaluable possessions of the educational institutions, could not be taken to the West.

In addition to armed struggle, the Central Committee of the Communist Party also wished to establish the conditions of an armed uprising to rescue Budapest by gathering all anti-Nazi forces into an organization even broader than the Hungarian Front.

Besides Horthy's proclamation, the pro-Horthy officers of the army were influenced most by the message of the Commander and the General Staff of the First Hungarian Army on 16 October and, a few days later, by the desertion of Chief of Staff János Vörös, and his appeal addressed to the army and to all strata of society. Both appeals were dropped in hundreds of thousands of copies by Soviet planes over the Hungarian front positions in the hinterland, and their contents were covered in broadcasts by the front radio stations, as well as by Radio Kossuth and the Hungarian-language transmissions of Moscow, London and other radio stations. In Budapest, the resistance groups themselves also multiplied them and

passed them on in large numbers especially among the military forces. The only illegal newspaper—*Eb uralakó*—of the pro-Horthy military groups attached to the "Freedom Movement of Hungarian Army Officers" also published the appeal of Chief of Staff Vörös. Both the rank and file and a part of the staff of officers of the army were roused by the Debrecen tank battle ending with the total defeat of the 2nd and 3rd Hungarian armies, after which the fascists had to give up the whole territory East of River Tisza. The staff of officers complained that the Germans took over the command of the higher units from the Hungarian officers. A military pamphlet stated: "We have become an auxiliary people in Hitler's terminology".

After 15 October, more than ten thousand soldiers of the First Hungarian Army followed the appeal of their commander to change sides. Changing sides became more frequent in the other army groups as well. In a number of units, only serious threats could force soldiers to take the oath for Szálasi. From mid-October on, in the General Staff, the military institutions and the troops, many gathered around certain officers seeking to establish contact with the anti-Nazi political groups, primarily with the Hungarian Front.

When the first wave of arrests following the Szálasi putsch calmed down, the different groups that had participated in the Horthyist endeavour to break away sought contact again both with each other and with the Hungarian Front, the only remaining political force.

In this situation, the Communist Party proposed to establish a central organ that would include the Hungarian Front, too. Accordingly, negotiations started at end-October, early-November with the Freedom Alliance of Hungarian Patriots, the Hungarian Federation of Friends of the Soviet Union, the Hungarian March Federation, the Hungarian Independence Movement (that had been closest to the Office for Breakaway), and with other groups as well. At the proposal of the Hungarian Front, a decision was reached according to which Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was to lead the future central organ.

After the preparatory talks, the representatives of the Hungarian Front and other organizations met at the Nádor Street Headquarters of the Nitrochemistry Institute on 9 November. Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was absent; he and the Smallholders Party were represented by lawyer János Csorba, an MP of the Smallholders Party, while the Communist Party and the National Peasant Party were represented by Gyula Kállai and Imre Kovács, respectively. The representatives of the Freedom Alliance of Hungarian Patriots, the Hungarian Independence Movement, the Hungarian Federation of Friends of the Soviet Union and the Teleki Hostel were also present. After the opening words of János Csorba, Gyula Kállai praised the great significance of the cooperation and joint stand of the political parties and the various social groups, and of the establishment of a joint organ. He emphasized that the organization should start work as soon as possible. All anti-Nazi forces were to be included, and anti-Nazi mobilization was to be carried out. After lengthy debates, they agreed that the joint organization was to be called the Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising (*Magyar Nemzeti Felkelés Felszabadító Bizottsága*). It was also agreed that Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky would be

Chairman of the Committee, with János Csorba as his deputy. All the parties and organizations, including those joining later on, had one delegate in the Committee. The Hungarian Front made efforts to retain to a certain extent its independence within the committee, and to exert a positive influence on the work of the new organization. Those surrounding the Hungary of March, the paper *Ellenállás* were also represented in the Committee. The Freedom Front of Hungarian Youth also delegated a representative, but the events prevented his participation in the work of the Committee.

At the statutory meeting, the press and propaganda activity of the Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising (LC for short) was discussed. There was some talk of the need to issue a joint statement. It was decided that a military staff would be set up of the military personalities of the member groups, to elaborate the military plan of armed struggle or armed uprising under the auspices of the Committee, to organize and direct the military units and to prepare armed uprising. At the end of the statutory meeting, the most important tasks and the main aims of the committee were stated as follows:

"In full awareness of our historic responsibility, we have decided after preliminary negotiations to establish the Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising acknowledging the following basic objectives: 1) To drive out the German and fascist hirelings of the country and to organize a national uprising cooperating with the glorious Red Army; 2) to establish a free, independent and democratic Hungary; 3) to prepare for basic social changes; 4) to realize close cooperation with all the neighbouring states; 5) to establish the closest fraternal cooperation with our giant neighbour, the Soviet Union. We call on all political parties, social, professional and trade unions identifying themselves with these basic principles to join our Liberation Committee." Thus, the document defined the basic aims of the LC on the basis of the program of the Communist Party and the Hungarian Front.

The first report on the establishment of the Committee was published by the illegal paper *Szabadságharc* (War of Independence); later on, the November issues of *Ellenállás* and *Eb ura fakó* also reported the event. The establishment of the Committee marked an "extremely significant turn" in the history of Hungarian resistance movement. Special emphasis was laid on the fact that the Communist Party was also present in the Committee. The reports said that the organization included all the democratic forces, and that it considered its main task the preparation and direction of the anti-German war of independence.

Already during the preparatory negotiations, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky elaborated the draft of the appeal that was to announce the formation of the Committee and outline to its tasks. The draft appeal differed considerably from the program adopted at the statutory meeting, and, stirred quite a storm. The draft stated: "Hungary's legal Head of State is still Governor Miklós Horthy, acknowledged by the vast majority of the nation organizing to rise." At the same time, it also emphasized that "the deposit of the political power of the nation is the Hungarian Front" and, accordingly, during Horthy's captivity "only the Hungarian Front,

representing the majority of the nation, can practice the political power of the rising nation". It also stated that the Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising was a joint action committee established "to organize, start and carry out at the fastest possible pace" the national uprising and the war of independence, and its tasks were limited to the period of the uprising. Finally, it called all officers, soldiers and patriots to fight.

Although the Horthyist groups welcomed the definite siding with Horthy, they criticized the draft for considering the Hungarian Front the sole constitutional representative of the Hungarian nation, and excluding the other resistance groups. The Communist Party also disagreed with the above evaluation of resistance and legal continuity, but was of the opinion that any further sharpening of the differences in views could only hinder the realization of the most important aim, the intensification of anti-German struggle. Therefore, they proposed that, instead of a detailed appeal analyzing the events, the Committee should accept a short statement calling the whole nation to struggle. That is how on 10 November the Committee worded its appeal to the Hungarian people, emphasizing that "Szálasi's rule is unconstitutional and illegal! Legal continuity is represented by the Liberation Committee, since it is they who are working on preparing the armistice. The Liberation Committee is organizing the national uprising, and has taken over the legal representation of the nation." Accordingly, it called on officials, workers, peasants, citizens, students, railway employees, soldiers and policemen to use all their power to hinder the operation of the Nazi military machinery, and to join with or without arms the army organized by the Committee. A separate appeal was issued to the people of Budapest, instructing them to refuse the orders of both evacuation and joining up, with special emphasis on that the bourgeoisie and the workers should "save their workplaces and means of production", and that they should not believe the anti-Soviet rumours, because no harm would befall anybody without reason.

VI. 3. The Establishment of a Military General Staff and the Plan of an Armed Uprising

At the time of the elaboration and announcement of the political platform of the Liberation Committee, and even before that, measures had been taken for the military preparation of the armed uprising. It has already been mentioned that, in addition to the organization of the partisan groups and their direction, and the mobilization of the workers, the Military Committee of the Communist Party also attached considerable significance to agitation within the rank and file of the army. They considered it very important to win over the pro-Horthy officers, and through them the rank and file, and to include them into the armed actions. Contact had been made with these officers already before 15 October, and they remained faithful to Horthy even after the Arrow-Cross putsch.

At end-October the Military Committee established contact with several independently organized groups of officers including that of Major Imre Radványi, partly by using contact built earlier (i.e., with the one directed by Dean Ferenc Kálló at the Army Officers' Hospital in Buda), and partly through Captain Kálmán Révay, a member of the military resistance organized by Lieutenant General Platthy. Radványi coordinated the work of several resistance groups, the Hadik garrison, the Military Technical Institute, the main logistics division of the Ministry of Defence, the Office of Air Defence; meanwhile, he established contact with Colonel Jenő Nagy. Through Gyula Dessewffy and Zoltán Pfeiffer, Colonel Nagy established relations with the Hungarian Front, and he conducted talks on the inclusion of certain units of the army. At end-October, he wanted to contact the Military Committee of the Communist Party to start talks on the inclusion of the workers and the communist armed groups. The Military Committee had the same endeavours. Through the mediation of Major Radványi, a meeting was arranged in the first days of November. The group of officers led by Jenő Nagy were first received by László Rajk, a secretary of the Central Committee, then they had talks with György Pálffy and László Sólyom. Rajk described the achievements reached up to that time in the field of the mobilization and military preparation of the workers. He openly admitted that the military training of the armed groups of workers under organization, comprising nearly six thousand people, was insufficient, their equipment and arms poor, though there was hope that they would be completed in various ways. Rajk asked for assistance in this field and in the direction of the workers' militia. Thus, the conditions for cooperation were established.

Bajcsy-Zsilinszky also had talks with Jenő Nagy about the military preparations and future plans. The Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising decided that, in order to coordinate the military forces, a Military Staff would be set up that *would operate in subordination to the Committee, "implementing the military aspects of its political ideas"*, and would elaborate the military plans of the armed uprising. The Committee accepted a proposal put forward by Bajcsy-Zsilinszky that the commander of the Military Staff should be Lieutenant General János Kiss, one of the few Hungarian officers capable of fulfilling this task. No doubt, the fact that the General was a good friend of Bajcsy-Zsilinszky contributed to his being selected, but this was not the main reason. Although retired in 1941, János Kiss enjoyed great respect among the Horthyist officers. His family's past, their role in the War of Independence and the General's well-known anti-German stance were also important factors. Already in his military analysis written in 1942, János Kiss reckoned with a German defeat and urged gradual separation from the Nazis. In 1943 he was a member of the Military Tribunal established to examine the case of those guilty of the bloodshed at Újvidék in 1942. According to certain sources, at the beginning of 1944, Kiss was working on a military plan to promote separation from the Nazis. Thus, János Kiss really seemed suitable to become head of the Military Staff.

János Kiss established contact with Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and Colonel Jenő Nagy on 11 November. After his appointment, the final composition of the military staff was decided on. Kiss's deputy, and also his Chief of Staff was Jenő Nagy. Captain Vilmos Tartsay was appointed to coordinate and direct the contacts between the officers joining the movement and the Staff, as well as to create a registration of personnel. Staff officers Pál Németh, Miklós Balássy, István Beleznaý and István Tóth were drawn into the direct work of the Staff (preparation and implementation of plans; the winning over of high-ranking officers, etc.). Lieutenant Colonel Pál Almásy, Major Imre Radványi and Captain József Kővágó also joined the work.

The Staff elaborated the plan of the liberation of Budapest on the basis of Jenő Nagy's ideas. It included three main tasks: 1) The blowing up of the transport routes to be used by the retreating German armed forces. 2) Prevention of the blow-ups ordered by the German military leadership, with special regard to the capital's bridges, public utilities and factories. 3) Establishment of contacts with the Soviet armed forces as soon as possible, so as to start an uprising among the workers with the support of the military units simultaneously with the Soviet attack against the capital.

The Staff decided to set up various groups to promote the detailed elaboration and implementation of the plan. The first was the field-staff, the centre of which was formed by the above-mentioned staff officers. The engineering group was responsible for scouting the plans of the blowing up of bridges, constructive works, factories and public buildings, for preventing their execution and working out plans to do so. The third, logistic, group was to organize the collection of food, money, vehicles, fuel, weapons, ammunition and other necessary war materials, as well as their storage and distribution. And finally, the signal group was to set up a telecommunication system by putting up and operating a longer-range radio station. The first two groups, the field-staff and the technical group, were actually set up. The organization of the other groups were also put on the agenda.

The Staff's plan included the division of the capital into four military sectors. Sector 1 was Csepel; Sector 2 covered the territory from the Danube to Kerepesi Street (the so-called South-East Sector); Sector 3 was the Eastern Sector (from Kerepesi Street towards the North up to the Danube); and Sector 4 was Buda. The commanders were appointed and the first series of tasks given in Sectors 1 and 2. The commander of the Csepel Sector was Artillery Colonel Kaffka; that of the South-East Sector Major Róbert Schreiber. Their tasks were, among other things, to keep an eye on the factories, constructive works and routes, to measure up the possibilities of erecting road blockades, to search for communication equipments, to establish contacts with the workers, and to equip a station to direct the personnel. There were also mutual contacts between the commanders of the two Sectors.

The detailed plan checked up with the Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising at around 20 November was as follows: "As soon as the Red Army reaches the limits of Budapest, the organized units, with the command of their officers and with the help of the armed workers and citizens, will attack at a

given signal the directing headquarters of the occupying German forces, the Hotels Astoria, Royal, Ritz, and Wien, the Gestapo-seat at Svábhegy, the German Embassy, the Arrow-Cross ministries and the House of Faith. Other attacking units will occupy the Post Office, the Railway Headquarters, the railway stations and junctions. Still other units will occupy the Danube bridges... disarming the guards... preventing their blow-up. According to the plan, simultaneously with these actions, the fighting forces establish contact in the Southern part of Budapest with the Russian troops, and maintain them as long as the units of the Red Army enter the capital and eliminate the German and Arrow-Cross units in cooperation with the Hungarian forces."

In compliance with the Staff's plan, the LC considered the time ripe for the establishment of direct contacts with the Soviet forces, primarily with Marshal Malinovsky, Commander in Chief of the Second Ukrainian Front and, on the other hand, with the Soviet government through Foreign Minister Molotov. The Committee considered it necessary to check the plan of the uprising with the plans of the Soviet army concerning the liberation of Budapest, and this was the subject of the letter addressed to Malinovsky. According to the letter, the delegation departing to Moscow was to "inform the Soviet Union of the work of the LC", and discuss "cooperation between the internal resistance and the Soviet forces, and request the Soviet Union to recognize the Liberation Committee".

The final form of the letter to be sent to Molotov was drafted by Bajcsy-Zsilinszky on 19 November. The first part described the formation of the Hungarian Front and the resistance movement, and the events of 15 October. Then the letter went on to state that, in this critical period, the Hungarian Front undertook "the organization and direction of the national uprising against the German occupiers. First of all, it organized the Liberation Committee of National Uprising comprising the delegates of the parties of the Hungarian Front and the most valuable non-party resistance organizations". The Hungarian Front and the Liberation Committee turned to the Soviet government with a request "to establish close contacts and cooperation with the Soviet Union and the Soviet-Russian armed forces as soon as possible, so that the Hungarian uprising forces might contribute to the liberation of our poor, time-tested nation as efficiently as possible". The letter went on to ask that "the following issues and those related to them" be discussed with the delegation passing on the letter and listed by name in the document:

"1) The Hungarian units opening the front ahead of the Soviet-Russian army should not be considered prisoners of war, but should be organized in separate regiments, and should be allowed to participate, under Hungarian command, in the fight against the German Empire within the operational framework of the Soviet-Russian army.

2) The Hungarian soldiers and members of the forced labour companies taken prisoners since 1941 by the Soviet-Russian forces should be allowed to be organized into the Hungarian uprising army to be set up, so that they might participate under

Hungarian command in the liberation of their homeland, as well as in the further struggle waged against the German Empire.

3) The resulting Hungarian liberation army, to be completed first of all by the workers' troops being set up in the not yet liberated areas, mainly in Budapest, and, in general, by the Hungarian population volunteering for partisan activity, should be supplied urgently with the necessary amount of modern equipment and weapons.

4) In liberated Hungary, civilian administration, including the organs in charge of public order, are to be retained.

5) Practical harmony and cooperation should be developed between the forces of the Hungarian National liberation movement fighting both in the liberated and unliberated territories, and the forces of the Soviet-Russian army."

The concluding part of the letter urged to develop cooperation and to provide assistance. The letter was signed by Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, Chairman of the Committee.

The letter, no doubt, contained grave contradictions. However, both the plan of the General Staff and the letter contained an important statement warranting special emphasis, namely that, during the uprising, they meant to depend on the workers' units and the partisans, so much so, that they even asked the help of the Soviet forces in providing modern armaments for these units.

The plan of the uprising was no doubt grandiose. The only problem is to what extent they calculated with the possibilities; how and with what forces they envisaged to realize the plan. Following the establishment of the Committee and the setting up of the Staff—according to the available sources—the selection of the staff of the uprising began in Budapest. At the time of grave military and political situations, there are generally plenty of signs of the darkest forces of the past, but those of the future social change are also apparent already. That is the time when political adventurers, designing people and those endeavouring to preserve their existence for posterity appear on the scene; but the bearers of the future, the healthy elements of society forced precisely by the logic of the events to select the road of action also enter the stage of history. This duality and the *putsch-like* plan of the uprising branded the organization, and this was also the reason for the failure of this very promising undertaking.

Thus, for example, the joining up of an ever increasing number of officers was, in most cases, merely of individual act of formal significance only. Accordingly, when certain individuals were assigned by the Staff to carry out tasks related to the planned uprising, they either did not fulfil their obligations, or did so inefficiently, as in the case of Lieutenant Colonel Almásy, who was ordered to travel to the 1st Army and win over its Chief of Staff for the movement. Too much time was spent by the resistance on persuading high-ranking officers to join them. At the same time, they neglected to win over the units; the rank and file were not given concrete tasks. Often, the officers did not attend the meetings, or attended them irregularly, and would not make the least effort to observe the rules of conspiracy. However, the resistance movement had contacts not only in Budapest, but in Transdanubia, too,

as for instance with an artillery division and an air-defence unit, and also with a larger Hungarian unit stationed in defence lines along the Danube, and with officers at military airfields. In Budapest, several Auxiliary Detachment Units have announced their readiness to join, as for instance battalions XIV/2. and the XIII/1. Later on, both played significant roles in the struggle against the Nazis. The resistance groups set up at the different district police headquarters maintained different forms of contacts with the Staff of the resistance movement. The Auxiliary Detachment Units themselves also served as a gathering place for the military, for forced labourers or "civilian" resisters who joined up individually or in groups.

The Military Staff gave priority to negotiations all along, neglecting actual operative organizational work. They did not know what to do with the deserters volunteering in masses or with smaller military units. These groups asked concrete tasks "so that time would not be wasted". Tartsay, the officer responsible for personnel, could simply not provide concrete tasks for those turning to him. In most cases, he asked the groups to come back later. The working method of the Military Staff was not accidental; it was related to the fact that they wanted a *putsch-like* uprising at a given moment of time.

This solution was criticized by the representatives of the Communist Party, and also by other members of the LC. On the initiative of the party, a "coordinating meeting" was convened with the participation of Committee Chairman Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, Communist Party Secretary László Rajk and the members of the military staff. The meeting discussed the concrete tasks of cooperation between the army and the workers. László Rajk disapproved of the *putsch* plan for armed uprising. He proposed to start the military actions of the smaller units simultaneously with the central organization, and to attach the individuals and groups wishing to join to these units. Concrete military activity would, no doubt, have increased the self-confidence of the groups; their successes could have attracted those who still hesitated, and they could have disturbed the measures introduced by the fascists.

Although the Staff did not accept the proposals of the CP, Jenő Nagy, the actual commander of the Staff, wanted to change the principles of organization. This was one of the reasons why a meeting was convened at Tartsay's flat in the evening hours on 22 November 1944.

The debate concerning the contents of the letter to be sent to Marshal Malinovsky and Foreign Minister Molotov and the selection of the delegation took place around 20 November. The Military Staff delegated Major Imre Radványi. Professor Szent-Györgyi, who enjoyed the protection of the Swedish Embassy was appointed to head the delegation, and accepted the task, while the third member of the delegation, Géza Péntes, a leader of the Hungarian Federation of Friends of the Soviet Union, was selected because of his knowledge of Russian and his Soviet contacts. It suffices to take a glance at the list to see that the political basis of the Committee, the Hungarian Front, was not represented in the delegation at all. This led to disagreement and with good reason. In the last minute, Gábor Péter, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party was also delegated as a

representative of the Hungarian Front. Jenő Nagy and his staff elaborated several routes to get the delegation over the front-lines. Finally, they decided that the delegation was to carry the Russian and French copies of the signed letters by a plane departing from the Székesfehérvár airport on 23 November. However, the arrest of several members of the Military Staff and the LC, including Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky in the evening and night hours of November 22 prevented the departure of the delegation.

The arrest of the members of the Military Staff was the result of conspirational and other mistakes. Through the treason of Armoured Corps Ensign Tibor Mikulics, a unit of the National Reckoning Bench commanded by Gendarme Lieutenant-Colonel Norbert Orendy was informed of the meeting on 22 November and even learned the secret password. The gendarmes occupied the vicinity of 29 Andrassy Street, where the flat of Tartsay was, and with the help of the secret password (*mozi*, 'cinema') the gendarme sleuths entered the house and arrested the officers arriving there one after the other. The same night, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was arrested at his hiding-place in the Botanical Garden, and Lieutenant General János Kiss at Tárogató Street.

The arrests continued a few days later. Very many members of the member organizations and groups were arrested. The abortive bomb attempt against Defence Minister Beregfy on 27 November was followed by another wave of arrests directed mainly at army officers. Contemporary documents and memoirs estimated the number of officers arrested between 22 November and the beginning of December at several hundreds. At the beginning of December, the arrests were extended to the Auxiliary Detachment Units. Many resistance fighters of the Freedom Front of Hungarian Youth were also arrested, and ten of them were immediately executed. At the beginning of December László Rajk, too, was captured by the detectives.

The majority of the arrested were transported to the Margaret Boulevard prison. They were cruelly tortured by sadistic gendarme detectives, but the leaders did not break. The hearing of the summary military court was based on the notes taken during the interrogations on 6-7 December. The Chief of Staff as responsible commander brought charges of treachery against Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and ten accomplices: retired Lieutenant General Vitéz János Kiss; retired Staff Captain Dr Vilmos Tartsay; reserve Cavalry Captain Kálmán Révay; Colonel Jenő Nagy; Lieutenant Colonel Pál Almásy; Air Force Major Miklós Balássy; Staff Captain István Tóth; Captain József Kövágó; Major Róbert Schreiber; and the Director of the Nitrochemical Institute, Miklós Makay. "The aim of the movement was—the indictment emphasized—to resist militarily the strategic movement of the allied German armed forces and the measures of the government in Budapest positioned immediately behind the operational area; to prevent the blowing up of the transport lines that might have been carried out in an occasional withdrawal of the German armed forces, then, after joining the Russian army [to continue] the war against the Germans, with which activity they have caused premeditated

disadvantages to the armed forces of the Hungarian state and its ally, and advantages for the enemy, and they united for this purpose."

At the trial, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky bravely cast in his judges' face: "... I acted to my best conviction, in full consciousness, and in the interest of the country... I felt that the country had to be broken away from the war and the side of the Germans, by force if necessary... What I committed, I did because of my political and military conviction; this was the only possibility that could have saved the country and the Hungarian nation in the present grave situation". When he was charged with cooperating with the communists, his old enemies, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky stated: "this country, dragged into senseless war, can only be saved by those means... that present themselves, and those paths that can be covered..." János Kiss also acted as a true patriot when he stated: "I acted according to my best conviction when I joined the movement, believing to serve my country hereby."

The counsel of Bajcsy-Zsilinszky submitted a protest on legal grounds, saying that his client was protected by parliamentary immunity, thus his hearing was postponed.

After the court comedy, the Summary Military Court announced the verdict at noon on 8 December. János Kiss, Vilmos Tartsay and Jenő Nagy were sentenced to death, while the other culprits were ordered by the court to be judged by "plenary suit". The court was transformed into a court of grace and refused the clemency pleas. The sentences were executed in the courtyard of the Margaret Boulevard prison on 8 December.

The newspaper of the Communist Party, the illegal *Szabad Nép*, called the martyrs the brave sons of the Hungarian people, the heroic soldiers of resistance, whose example would increase the determination of the Hungarian workers to "eliminate once and for all the traitor hangmen. The names of János Kiss and his heroic companions are locked in the hearts of millions of Hungarian workers for ever." In its 12 December 1944 transmission, Radio Kossuth praised the heroes of the "new Hungarian war of independence" in similar terms under the title "We Will Carry Out the Will of the Martyrs", stating that it is the "Hungarian soldier and officer, having a weapon in his hand, who can do most" for the ideas for which they have sacrificed their lives.

Bajcsy-Zsilinszky's parliamentary immunity was waived by the National Alliance of Legislators on 7 December. However, the speedy progress of the Red Army hindered the endeavour of the court to hold his hearing in Budapest. Together with the "serious political criminals" imprisoned in the Margaret Boulevard prison, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was transported to Sopronkőhida. There, the military tribunal holding its hearing in the local school, sentenced him to death on 23 December. The sentence was carried out in the courtyard of the prison in the morning of 24 December. It was a curious historic coincidence, symbolizing the life of Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky who had come to the resistance camp from quite a distance, that three condemned communist youths, Barnabás Pesti, and two young ironworkers, Róbert Kreutz and István Pataki, were also executed the same morning.

Other leaders of the committee like Emil Fisch and György Dallos, an excellent engineer of the United Incandescent Lamp Factory, were also executed at Sopronkőhida. No definite information is available as to those who were executed at Sopronkőhida, and even less on the fate of the hundreds of soldiers and civilians arrested because of their connection with the Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising. The majority were transported to Germany after the evacuation of the prison.

With the arrest of Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, János Kiss and their circle, the plan for armed uprising failed. It failed, because it was denounced, and because it did not take Hungarian realities into consideration to a sufficient extent. Neither the Hungarian politicians, nor the Hungarian anti-Nazi staff of officers had any concrete experience in armed uprising since, up to the very last moment, their tasks were to hinder such uprisings. The reason of the failure should not be sought merely in treason, but also in that many of those who joined the movement did so nominally only, not with full heart. They considered the life-and-death struggle of the nation to be a topic of coffee-house discussions or, at worst, a simple operational task. Although the plan did count upon the armed groups of workers or those who were being armed, it was not based on the mobilization of broad spheres of masses, and even objected to smaller armed actions. However, only such actions could have helped those shrinking from the risks of fighting to overcome their fears. This would have been the way to make both soldiers and civilians realize their own strength and the political and military weaknesses of the enemy. In the given stage of the organization of the uprising, the fact that several participants were anti-Nazi, but were still afraid of a revolution proved to be such a contradiction that could not be dissolved. On the eve of the arrests, the leaders had realized some of their mistakes, and they wanted to remedy them. It seemed that planning would finally be replaced by acts. This, however, was not the case.

Thus, the plan of the uprising remained no more than a plan, but the movement was still an integral part of the struggle waged by the Hungarian anti-fascist forces. János Kiss, Jenő Nagy and Vilmos Tartsay were Horthyist officers, but they turned against their whole past in the interest of their homeland. They became anti-fascists not only in words but also in deeds.

After the arrest of the leaders of the Committee and the Military Staff, the organization fell into pieces. The personal power and courage of Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and János Kiss was there no more, and there were no army officers to form the backbone of yet another military staff. The majority of Horthyist officers and politicians who were not arrested backed out from further organizational work, or sought the possibilities of resistance on other paths. The bourgeois groups, deprived of most of their leaders, fell apart; their members either retired from further action or joined the Auxiliary Detachment Units that were increasingly successful in their struggle against the Nazis. There were also those who chose passive resistance. The Hungarian Front also limited most of its activities to maintaining contacts. Their activities were, naturally, limited by the well-known

vandalism of the Nazis and the Arrow Cross as well as by the circumstance that the siege of Budapest limited their freedom of movement to a minimum.

At that time, armed struggle was organized by the Communist Party and its Military Committee alone. As a result of their work, the activities of not only the communist partisan groups, but also of the military detachment groups under the influence of the party were strengthened. The activity of the armed action guards of the party and the YCL was further intensified in December. They blew up German trucks, cannons and other military equipment. On several occasions, they cut the telephone and telegraph lines, halted railway communications on the circle railway around the city, between Kelenföld railway station and the Southern railway bridge, as well as on the railway line between Budapest and Vác. The pylons ensuring the current supply of the capital were blown up on many occasions. Hand-grenade attacks were carried out against several district fascist bookshops and Arrow-Cross centres, including those in Rökk Szilárd Street, in Angyalföld, Rákospalota and the Volksbund Headquarters on Tisza Kálmán Square. On 3 December, home-made bombs were used to break up an Arrow-Cross rally in the *Városi Színház* (City Theatre).

In certain places the partisan guards of the party grew into considerable armed units. The Újpest unit led by László Földes and the Kőbánya-Kispest unit commanded by Károly Kiss were composed of smaller groups. The partisan groups in Pestszeretű, Csepel, Rákospalota and Rákoshegy attempted to open up the sector of the front-line, though with little success. Of the partisan units operating in the countryside, mention should be made of the MOKAN Committee in Miskolc and the miners and partisans of Sárísáp.

The activity of those partisan groups that had arrived from the Soviet Union between August and October ended—with the exception of the Petőfi and Nógrádi units—as a result of their merging with the Soviet Army. After the Arrow-Cross putsch, no more partisan groups were dropped over Hungary from the partisan camp near Kyev, although several hundreds of Hungarian partisans were awaiting action there. There were several reasons for this, such as poor flying conditions and visibility, and the unsuitability of the Hungarian territories still occupied by the Nazis for the establishment of partisan bases. Another important factor was that in November 1944 the Soviet military leadership considered the military situation favourable, and was of the opinion that the liberation of Budapest and Transdanubia was a matter of a very short period of time.

The number of Hungarian partisans disclosed so far (and probably far from complete) is nearly two and a half thousand. There were nearly 550–650 armed men fighting in the units organized and directed by the Communist Party or established spontaneously in and around Budapest. Some 500–550 people fought in the countryside, mainly in groups initiated by the local Communist Party organizations. From the Soviet Union, 10–12 Hungarian organized partisan groups were flown in. Six of these increased in size and were organized into separate partisan units. Their strength exceeded a thousand. However, the number of Hungarian patriots who took up arms in other countries, in the Soviet Union,

Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and elsewhere, to fight for the liberation of the given countries, and at the same time for the independence and liberty of Hungarian people was far more, about six or seven thousand.

The list of partisan groups fighting in Hungary did not include the different armed military units that, mainly in the capital, within the framework of the Auxiliary Detachment Units, formed an integral part of armed resistance. In the case of the Auxiliary Detachment Units and the other anti-fascist military groups, relations with communist or other left-wing organizations were almost always evident. In most cases this was realized through the infiltration of a communist of some other left-wing group. Later, dozens of the persecuted joined these units either with the help of their commanders who had been won over, or otherwise. The resistants and the persecuted obtained legal military documents, and in many cases, with the help of military passes, they even managed to get weapons. Thus, they could openly carry their weapons, they could move about in groups and were free to move. The units elaborated extremely smart tactics. While they apparently served the system, acting as police force, during the dark of night, or when they did not have to fear discovery, they waged relentless attacks against the Arrow Cross.

Very many of the Auxiliary Detachment Units became bases of resistance in the capital. The squadrons in districts 5, 6, 7 and 8 carried out a number of actions against the Germans and their accomplices, while the battalions in districts 13 and 14 joined the resistance movement through their anti-fascist officers and their close contacts with the communists. The 13/1 battalion, commanded by First Lieutenant Lajos Gidófalvy, was stationed in the Vilmos barracks. They established contacts with the partisans in Újpest and various other anti-German groups. They defended the Ferdinand Bridge against the Arrow-Cross forces, the children's homes under the protection of the International Red Cross and the Swedish Legation, and other buildings as well. They provided arms, ammunition and false documents to several resistance groups. Similar actions were pursued by the 14/2 unit, commanded by Kálmán Zsabka, with Deputy Commander Károly Vargha, a member of the "Royal" Revue Theatre. In cooperation with Vargha, the Red Brigade infiltrated the squadron. This group fought very fiercely against Arrow-Cross terrorist groups in Zugló. The majority of the fighters in both groups were captured by the Arrow-Cross unity and the Gestapo. The fascists carried out their first surprise attack on 29 December, when 90 members of the civilian (so-called Radó) group in contact with the 13/1 battalion were arrested. On 6 January, they arrested the members of the Red Brigade, while on 7 January they hit the 14/2 Auxiliary Detachment Unit and dragged away 220 resistance fighters. Finally, on 8 January, at the Vilmos barracks headquarters of the 13/1 battalion the resistance fighters, too, were arrested. Nearly four hundred resistants were transported to the cellars of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Castle, where they were brutally tortured and most of them were executed. Several civil defence units also protected the persecuted and the resistance fighters.

The communists managed to infiltrate nearly fifty people into the Auxiliary Detachment Unit of the third district, who worked there till the dissolution of the

unit. In Óbuda, a 30-member armed group was organized, under communist direction, which was also in contact with the above-mentioned Auxiliary Detachment Unit. They carried out armed actions, and defended the waterworks and the gas-works. The Auxiliary Detachment Units also played an important role in the resistance movement in the countryside. Documents are available on the close cooperation of the MOKAN Committee of Miskolc and the local national guards squadron, and there is information on the similar role played by the Auxiliary Detachment Unit at Kassa. The number of armed resistance fighters in the Auxiliary Detachment Units exceeded two thousand. Further research will, no doubt, reveal further facts.

After the breaking up of the centre for armed uprising, the "daily actions" proposed by the Communist Party could still have been broadened. However, the population of Budapest threatened by the concentration of the German and Hungarian military forces, the Gestapo, and the Arrow Cross terrorist troops shrank back from armed uprising.

The Hungarian resistance movement—as a result of its special circumstances—lagged one phase behind those of the other countries. This gap could only have been closed by successful cooperation with the anti-Nazi forces of the Hungarian ruling classes. It seemed that in mid-October there would be an armed uprising. But this was not the case. . . . In accordance with the phase-shift of the Hungarian resistance, a special, though not at all negligible form of anti-Nazi fight came to the forefront and was to grow into a nation-wide movement: passive resistance.

VI. 4. Mass-Scale Popular Resistance to Block Plans for the Destruction of the Country

At the time of the Arrow-Cross take-over, the Soviet forces had already liberated a considerable part of Hungary. Thus, valuable, mainly agricultural, areas were saved from further devastation. However, with regard to industrial and national economic values, the most important parts of the country were still in the hands of the Nazis; so much so, that a part of the goods dragged away from the Trans-Tisza region and the area between the rivers Danube and Tisza were also transported to Transdanubia. Counting on the possibility of Hungary's complete liberation, the Germans did not force the intensification of industrial production any more, but set out to drag away or destroy all values. In front of the liberating Red Army—as usual—they wanted to scorch every foot hold of land, and use all healthy people as cannon-fodder. It is needless to add that they could fully rely on the help of the Arrow Cross in doing so. Even if there were some debates among the "legislators" on the methods and degree of openness of the looting, they fully agreed on the essential points.

The infamous enemies of the Hungarian people were digging the grave of the nation. It depended to a great extent on the behaviour of the working people whether it was to swallow the nation or not. Although the masses could not take part

in armed resistance and in the partisan actions because of the irresponsibility and viciousness of their leaders, several facts prove the instinctive resistance of society to the method of the "scorched earth".

The real aim of the Nazi plans was first disclosed by the Communist Party: "From the point of view of Nazi war machinery, Hungary is the foreground of the German Empire, whose role is to hold back the Red Army town by town, village by village, and thus 'exhaust' it to forestall an immediate, concentrated attack against the German Empire. Hungary . . . is used as a tactical means by the Nazi total war machinery in order to 'gain time'." Another part of the above-quoted appeal pointed out that the dragging away of the population and national wealth, the paralyzing or the destruction of the factories had resulted in the increasing dissatisfaction of not only the vast majority of the nation, but even of certain capitalist and landowner groups, and met with a certain resistance. The party had realized correctly that the individuals or the groups were forced to accept anti-Nazi struggle by their worry for their direct interests, their mere existence. These, however, willy-nilly corresponded to the interests of the nation, and thus provided much better ground both in its dimensions and means for the mass-scale development of passive resistance than for undertaking armed resistance.

The Communist Party did its best to help and encourage the masses with leaflets, appeals and agitation by some of the communists, in order to develop the resistance into a nation-wide movement. A similar appeal was issued to the people by the Hungarian Front, then by the Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising, as well as by the illegally published newspapers, primarily *Szabad Nép*, *Szabad Ifjúság*, but even *Ellenállás*, *Szabadságharc*, and others. The November issue of *Ellenállás* wrote: "We are looking towards Szeged, Debrecen, the New Hungary, and refuse to leave. . . . The people of the country want a homeland and not homelessness. . . . Refuse all orders issued by the traitors".

Mass-scale resistance occurred mainly after the orders issued for the evacuation of the towns and villages. First in the Eastern regions of the country, and later on as the front moved, in further territories as well, a favourable change could be observed. However, with regard to the issue of evacuation, the views of the "rich" and the "poor" differed from the very start. The members of the ruling classes, the leaders of the state apparatus, even the government, the "Parliament", itself and even the military commands of the concerned territories had left the "endangered" territories weeks before the arrival of the front, while the majority of the workers and peasants stayed on. Already on 13 October, i.e. before the Arrow-Cross putsch, Chief of Staff János Vörös had to "suspend at once the preparatory plans for the evacuation of all military operational areas prepared or controlled by the commands, etc. East of the line of the rivers Ipoly and Danube", because their publication caused "scare", "panic", "confusion", "the end to statehood", mainly because the first to leave their positions were the leaders, the officials. Later on, Beregfy was compelled to repeat his predecessor's order that "the civilian organs of public administration can only resettle together with the army corps".

The panic-stricken flight of the ruling classes and their supporters at the very start may be explained by two factors. One was their worry of being held responsible of the revolution of the oppressed, while the other was their fear of the Red Army. The Hungarian ruling classes were the victims of their own propaganda campaign waged for decades against the "red phantom", increased to an incredible level after the Arrow-Cross putsch. They considered it practically unimaginable that those remaining at home would not be shot in the back of their head, or at best, be dragged to Siberia for forced labour.

The behaviour of the working people was completely different. No doubt, a minority, the wealthier part of the petty bourgeoisie, was at first influenced by the dirty propaganda and the flight of the leaders, and especially by the fact that the authorities always talked about the "provisional" abandonment of certain areas, or merely of the evacuation of areas *for the time of the military operations*. This was why almost half of the population of Debrecen, Nyíregyháza and Szeged had left their native towns. However, the population of the villages stayed behind. Already at the outset, it was clear that the peasants and workers in the areas East of the River Tisza were not willing to leave their native land, or the most that happened was that they moved into the area of isolated farms from the towns endangered by the fighting. In Hajdú County, East of the River Tisza, a popular proverb was born at the time: "Lords, priests, you should run, peasants should just move none". True, the saying was not quite appropriate, because most priests stayed where they were and this had a very favourable effect on the population. The priests were influenced by the appeals issued by Archbishop and Primate Jusztinián Serédi, by Bishop Imre Révész of the Reformed Church, and by other prelates, who considered that the priests should stay, because "that was their pastoral obligation".

When the order to evacuate was given, especially in the towns in the vicinity of Budapest as a result of the provisional slowing down of the front, the people who remained in their homes or who had returned there could have witnessed the wild looting of the Nazis. Although the fascists robbed in the areas east of the River Tisza, too, the speedy motion of the front prevented that this grow to such proportions, and those who had left their homes learnt of it only later. In the vicinity of the capital, even the commanders of the gendarme posts had to protest against the mass-scale lootings and violence of the German soldiers, because as they said: "Public opinion will gradually be full of these news, and anti-German sentiment increasingly spreads and intensifies." Their protest was accepted by the Arrow-Cross Minister of Home Affairs, himself, who submitted a report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the hope of a solution or at least a decrease in the lootings. After his inspection of the county in November, the Deputy Lieutenant of Tata urged speedy measures with the same intent. Anti-German sentiment was experienced by the staff of officers as well, during a visit of the Arrow-Cross representatives. "German looting actually has a depressive effect. If measures are not introduced to end the lootings, even the most sympathetic Hungarians will turn anti-German..." Since there was not much hope to end the lootings, and the Arrow Cross were not any different from the Germans, the latter, with reference to

the information of the concerned Wehrmacht command, issued a false report for the press and the radio that "Bolshevik agents, dressed in German uniforms, are looting to mislead the civilian population and to shake their confidence in the Hungarian and German military forces."

There was another very vulgar attempt: a radio interview supposedly made with Professor Szent-Györgyi. The essence of the interview was that Szent-Györgyi, the scientist, was arrested at Szeged by the Russians; he was cruelly tortured and then they wanted to drag him to Siberia, but Szent-Györgyi managed to escape and get to Budapest through the front line. The reason for this forgery was clear. The teachers, students of the Budapest universities, and other representatives of cultural life refused to leave Budapest. Thus, a false Szent-Györgyi was invented whose words would be listened to by the scientific world, and whose report on the "brutality of the Russians" would be believed, and thus, scare the population of the capital. Both "falsifications" were short-lived, because even the Arrow-Cross legislators doubted the credibility of the radio communication.

The horrible sufferings of those who escaped, the behaviour of the Arrow Cross and the Germans, and especially the news arriving from the already liberated areas had considerably decreased the number of those escaping from their homes, even among the lower ranks of government officials. It was precisely the lootings carried out by the Germans and the Arrow Cross that turned the already existing anti-German sentiment of the population into hatred, while the reports from the other side of the front had gradually eased the fear and tension of the strata of politically backward working people and the groups of the intellectuals, which was replaced by expectation and increasing sympathy.

During the preparations and the implementation of the military operations aimed at liberating Budapest, the population of the capital and its vicinity hindered the realization of the Nazi plans by sabotaging the orders for entrenchment aimed at paralyzing life, and by refusing the orders to evacuate. Already in November, the partial, and then the complete evacuation of the outskirts of Budapest was ordered. Prior to and during the partial evacuation, however, all sound people tried to make use of the fortification and entrenchment in order to receive the speedily progressing Soviet forces at least with partially constructed defence lines in the vicinity of the capital. Endeavours were made to mobilize great forces for this purpose. However, the communication between the different German and Hungarian military commands, the orders addressed to the Mayor of Budapest promising retaliatory measures and other documents all reflect the mass-scale sabotage of the fortification works.

In an order to the Mayor of Budapest and the Deputy Lieutenant of Pest County issued on 17 November 1944, the government commissioner for military operational areas wrote that "in the Southern section of the vicinity of the capital, the population turn up for fortification work sporadically only. Instead, they are searching for weapons, ammunition and explosives in the areas behind the troops... This behaviour of the population is all the more shameful since, according to the exact ascertainment of the intelligence service, on the territories

occupied by the enemy the male and female population . . . carries on the heaviest, and gravest physical work for the enemy." On the other hand, the Mayor requested the use of police detachments and demanded the most severe supervision of the grown-up population in order to be able to fulfil the orders of the military commands.

The deployment of the police detachments, the officials, the Arrow Cross Party units or even the gendarmes still failed to bring the expected results. At Csepel, the order was to have 500 men start work on 20 November. However, even after several hours, the gendarme command could not make a single person start work. The Mayor of Pesterzsébet should have had 2 500 people to start work, but he merely had 100 even after two days, although a gendarme and a police company also helped him "recruit". At Kispest on 7 November a total of 15 000 people were gathered from Pestszentlőrinc and Soroksár, but by the time the work would have started, they all disappeared. The Mayor of Kispest, two weeks later, drawing the conclusions of what had happened, mobilized the police detachment units, the national guards, officials as well as the gendarmes, and ordered to close all roadways leading towards Budapest. Then he threatened "to consider those deserters who did not appear at fortification works and to try them under summary jurisdiction". The report to the deputy-lieutenant confirmed that "the result was most deplorable. We could set up a unit of only nearly 100 people from among those who appeared."

The refusal to attend fortification work was connected with the sabotage of the order for general evacuation. Already at the fortification works and the partial evacuation, both consciously organized movement, and the presence of the left-wing forces and the influence of the leaflets was evident. The joint stand of the left-wing forces, the communists, social democrats, organized workers and the anti-Nazi bourgeois elements was strengthened and its organization was increased gradually from demonstration to demonstration. In the case of the sabotage of the fortification works and the partial evacuation, and in saving the masses of persecuted, the best documents were the war factory passes forged and multiplied by the thousand by the printing works of the different illegal groups, or received from leading officials of war factories, that changed in shape, form, colour and stamp day by day. The production of exempting passes was often carried out in an organized way.

The communists recognized the opportunities hidden in the mass refusal of fortification works and in the hindering of partial evacuation already at the beginning of November. They realized that with good organization they could mobilize the whole population of districts of villages, and that one success would lead to the others. So, the party had decided to mobilize the populations of certain parts of the town. However, it was important to correctly select the district where they organized the mass refusal of evacuation. The Central Committee of the Communist Party chose Csepel. There were several reasons for this choice, including the traditions of Red Csepel, the nearness of the Red Army, and the relatively well-organized position of the left-wing forces there. On 27 November the

Central Committee of the party issued an appeal to the workers of Csepel. The leaflet encouraged the workers to go on strike, to protect the plants and machinery, to get the transports already dispatched back or to blow them up. "*Violence against violence! Oppose violent evacuation violently.* . . . The eyes of the Hungarian workers and the workers of Budapest are all on you!"

When the Red Army appeared at the border of Csepel, the Arrow Cross gave the order for the complete evacuation of Csepel. The people of Csepel, led by "Committee 13", which by this time had established close contacts with the increasing number of deserting military units and also possessed a considerable stock of arms, refused the evacuation order. The day when the wall posters were put up, on 4th of December, and then on the 5th and 6th again, thousands gathered to demonstrate in front of the parish hall; they demonstrated on the streets of Csepel, protested against the order. Armed Arrow-Cross units could do nothing against the united action while the military forces ordered to the scene took the side of the demonstrators. Neither arrests, nor threats could suppress the Csepel demonstration, so on 6 December the authorities withdraw the evacuation order.

The central and regional committees of the Communist Party and the local leaderships of the Hungarian Front appealed to the people of Kispest, Pesterzsébet and Pestszentlőrinc to follow the example of the Csepel demonstrators, and *Ellenállás* did the same. The united action of the people of Csepel did not only mean a victory for Csepel. It forced the German and Arrow-Cross commands to give up the plans for the evacuation of the other workers' districts in the outskirts of the capital.

While in the territory East of the River Tisza, the dragging away of the national values was hindered by the speedy progress of the Soviet Army and the panic among the lines on the enemy, in the region between the rivers Danube and Tisza, in the capital, in the Northern industrial centres and in Pécs there was increasingly evidence of the joint, well-planned and organized stand of the anti-fascist forces. At Kalocsa 650 wagon-loads of wheat and oil seeds, as well as 45 wagon-loads of paprika were saved from being carried away by the Nazis because the peasants refused transport by carriages. For similar reasons 150 wagon-loads of potato at Dunaharaszti and 1 600 wagon-loads of wheat at Főherceglak in Transdanubia remained on their places. The Arrow Cross complained that the peasants had clamped and hidden their produce everywhere. The Germans mainly obtained the produce of the large estates; however, the servants and poor peasants did their best to save as much as possible there, too. The farmers and the servants removed the horseshoes, the tyres of the carriages, or used the very worst carriages so they could refuse their obligation to transport. Wherever there were forests in the vicinity, the animals were driven in there, while at other places they were hidden away in remote granges and barns. Larger droves were kept back on various pretexts. Despite all this, nearly half of the cattle stock and 60 per cent of the horse stock were dragged away.

The dragging away of the valuable machine industrial equipment (especially those owned by the joint German-Hungarian companies) started immediately after the Arrow-Cross putsch. The valuable machines of the Hungarian Optical Works,

the Weiss Manfred Co., the Danube Aircraft Factory, the MÁVAG, the United Incandescent Lamp Factory, the Metal, Weapons and Machine Factory, the Hungarian Ammunitions Works and the Shotgun Cartridge Factory of Székesfehérvár were dispatched to Germany. The workers joining forces with the technical intelligentsia, and in some cases even with the capitalists, did their best to decrease the rate of robbery. The constant transport of part of the machines from one plant to another, or between the plants and the main factory proved to be a good method. Sometimes machines were loaded into trains one day, then unloaded the next. There were many transports that travelled around the country, while others were first boarded on river barges, then boarded again on trucks, and finally the transported machinery was "left" in larger warehouses. In some instances, the transports to Germany included valueless goods instead of the valuable machines and raw materials.

A greater opportunity for organized resistance lay in paralyzing and blowing up plants. According to a government decree, by mid-November all plants and factories had to prepare their plans for paralyzing production or for blowing up the plants. The plans were accepted by a Hungarian-German joint commission, which even supervised the plans on the spot. There was tremendous indignation already in the region East of the River Tisza over the blowing up of plants, railways and public buildings. Since the capitalists themselves were also interested in saving at least part of their properties, they also attempted to hinder the paralyzing of their plants in their own way.

The communists, who had contacts with the bourgeois groups and through them with certain capitalist circles (György Markos, Károly Olt, Zoltán Gergő, Ferenc Donáth, Mihály Háy, László Orbán, István Tömpe and others) were commissioned to start negotiations with factory owners and leading officials with anti-German sentiments on behalf of the party of the Hungarian Front. According to their instructions, whenever it was possible, they had to achieve that with the acknowledgement or the tacit agreement of the leaders, defence committees be set up or strengthened in the factories. The company managers willing to cooperate had to be put in touch "with those plant managers and engineers who had already agreed to participate, and enjoyed the confidence of factory leadership, who would, together with the workers, organize the defence of the factory". The party also laid stress upon preparing defence plans not only for individual factories, but rather jointly by leaders and defence committees of certain trades or factories close to each other. The communists and the members of the Hungarian Front held discussions, among others, with the leaders, and in most cases with the general managers, of the Weiss Manfred Works, the Újpest Phoebus Electric Works, the Kelenföld Power Station and the nearby factories as well as the Alkaloida, the Hungarian Cloth Factory, the Budakalász Textile Works, the Győr Wagon Factory, the Hofherr-Schranitz, the BSZKRT, the Budapest Water and Gas Works, the Láng Machine Factory, the Hungarian Steelware Factory, the Rimamurány-Salgótarján Iron Works, and the Oefl Factory. They managed to establish contacts with some officials of the Ministry of Industrial Affairs, and even with certain members of the

technical joint commissions responsible for the preparation of the paralyzing actions. The discussions had a favourable influence on the struggle waged by joint effort by the workers and the technical staffs.

By the end of 1944, the factory defence committees were either set up or were being organized in many factories. They mainly comprised communists and social democrats, that is, organized workers and sympathizers, and at certain places they were also joined by the technical staffs or officials. At several places, armed guards were organized, or the command of the factory armed units was taken over. For instance, very strong armed defence units were set up at the Ganz Shipyards, the United Incandescent Lamp Factory, at the Public Utility Works, the Ironworks of Angyalföld, the Hungarian Steelware Factory, the Philips Works, the Láng Machine Factory, the Steyer Works, the Danuvia. At other places, contacts were established with the different Auxiliary Detachment Units (including the Kőbánya, Zugló, Óbuda and Kelenföld districts), or with partisan units, as in Újpest, Pesterzsébet and other districts.

The cooperation of the technical staffs and the workers, the active cooperation of the defence committees, the assistance of the Auxiliary Detachment Units, the support of the armed groups and the partisan units had saved the water tower at Újpest, and enabled the Phoebus Electric Works to provide electricity immediately after the liberation. As a result, the most valuable equipment of the Water and Gas Works of the capital remained intact, and could supply water and heating for the population of the capital. As another result of the mutual endeavours, the Kelenföld Power Station was saved. This was how the majority of the machine parks of the large ironworks at Fehérvári Street and elsewhere, and those of the textile, chemical and milling industrial factories were saved. At the International Docks, the MÁVAG and the Weiss Manfred Factory the results of the paralyzing actions were decreased, the machines, that were already ready for transport, were either hidden or replaced with others. When the Germans ordered to blow up 45 factories at the sight of the sabotage, struggle began to save them. At the giant Csepel factory the great turbine was just saved from being blown up: they cut the wires leading to the explosives, and the two six-metric-ton furnaces of the open-hearth furnace plant that were already prepared to be transported away were also saved in the last moment.

An imperishable merit of the population of the capital was the hiding of the persecuted, the deserters, and in some cases the Soviet prisoners of war. According to an official statement, one hundred thousand Jews were hidden in Budapest. The grandiosity of this behaviour must be underlined, since police raids and house searches followed one another almost constantly, and those who were found out had to pay with their lives. Those giving refuge to the persecuted, did not merely have to take the risk of revenge, but also had to share their last bits of food with those they were hiding.

In the outskirts of the capital, where successful struggle was being waged against evacuation and for the defence of the factories, efforts were also made to establish contacts with the Soviet Army. The opening up of the front was pressed by the

Communist Party mainly when the conditions for a general armed uprising did not exist in the capital any more. The Csepel "Committee 13" elaborated a plan whereby at the time of the Soviet attack the Csepel armed groups and military units would open up the front. However, the speedy attack of the Soviet forces did not provide an opportunity for them to implement the plan. Similar preparations were made at Pesterzsébet and Kőbánya. In the case of the latter, the partisan group attacked the retreating Germans from the rear.

Similar active and passive resistance developed in the Northern industrial region employing 30–35 000 workers. The Soviet forces approached very speedily. Simultaneously with the organization of armed resistance by the MOKAN Committee, the workers sabotaged the dismantling and transportation of the machines of the factories, mainly those of the important war factory, the Diósgyőr Ironworks. The guard consisting of members of the MOKAN Committee and the workers of the ironworks had defended the factory from the Arrow-Cross units arriving to evacuate the factory.

After the orders for evacuation had been issued, the workers mainly occupied the nearby forests where they set up their defence lines, and in certain places began armed resistance. The workers of the Diósgyőr Ironworks sought refuge on the Drenka Mountain and the Lyukó Valley, while the workers of Ózd moved into the nearby forests, the miners into the mines and the Karancs forests. The workers tried to establish contacts with the Hungarian armed units and to get them to oppose the Germans and the Arrow-Cross military police units. They established contacts with the Nógrádi partisan group that arrived in the region at the end of November.

At the beginning of December, the opposition of the population to the evacuation orders reached such proportions that the Wöhler army group had asked the Arrow Cross Ministry of Home Affairs through the Chief of Staff to provide them with enough detachment units to help them move the workers out of the forests around Miskolc and to ensure "with all available means" the evacuation of Ózd. Although the gendarme units did arrive and gathered a few hundreds of workers, the liberating military operations of the Soviet forces and the heroic stand of the population of the region hindered the dragging away of the workers. The resistance of the workers in the Northern industrial region was highly appreciated even by post-war West German military evaluations. Ex-Nazi General Hans Friessner wrote in his book of the uprising of *twenty* thousand workers in the Borsod industrial region, rendering the already grave military situation of the Germans catastrophic. Naturally, they were not twenty thousand, unless the people escaping in the forests were also included. Friessner's statement was very important because it reflected the influence of the movement in the industrial region on the German army, and he wanted to explain partly with the exaggeration why the Wehrmacht was forced to give up Northern Hungary so quickly.

Almost simultaneously with the events in the Borsod region, similar events took place in South Transdanubia, in Baranya County, on the eve of the liberation of Pécs. The Soviet forces broke through the line along the rivers Danube and Dráva unexpectedly, and appeared just under Pécs. This military movement created a

serious situation for the German and Hungarian forces. Defence was made even more difficult by the fact that the partisans had blown up the railway lines which were supposed to serve the German auxiliary units arriving from the Italian front to help defend Pécs. Under such conditions the German and Hungarian military leadership had ordered the immediate and complete evacuation of Pécs. However, with the exception of the leaders and the officials, everyone refused to leave the city. The sabotage of the railway employees made it impossible to transport out of the town the considerable amount of values, raw materials and food concentrated there. In a report dated 10 December, Mogyoróssy, the government commissioner for evacuation, told the events with shock. The evacuation, ordered for the 26 November, was mainly sabotaged by the Hungarian State Railways, because instead of the 353 wagons ordered for evacuation, only 35 were ready. With the words of the fascist government commissioner: the vast majority of the town's population "preferred the horrors of the occupation by the bolshevist hordes to escape". Thus "a tremendous amount of value and innumerable residents, capable of work and even of military service, remained there. . . . At the Pécs leather factory, 70 wagon-loads of leather goods, shoes, boots were saved. . . . as well as a considerably large stock of coal". In the area of County Baranya "a vast amount of cereals, sugar-beet and maize" remained. The Germans and their henchmen had hardly left the town when the representatives of the officials and the workers remaining there hurried to meet the liberating Soviet forces in order to negotiate on the fate of the town, the start of the new life.

By the end of 1944, after the encirclement of Budapest and the liberation of part of counties Baranya and Tolna, only Transdanubia remained in the hands of the Nazis and the Arrow Cross. The majority of the refugees, the different offices, military and other armed units were all concentrated on this territory. Large German forces were stationed there; partly the units that retreated ahead of the Soviet forces and partly those preparing to liberate the German and Hungarian forces that had been stuck in Budapest at the end of 1944. For the defence of the Margaret Line between lakes Balaton and Velence and for the renewal of the counter-offensive, further and further German units arrived. This, naturally, made organized resistance more difficult in Transdanubia. In the industrial and mining areas of the region, large numbers of police, gendarme and Gestapo units were concentrated. The village population in Transdanubia were partly held back from more determined anti-German actions by the considerable superiority of the enemy. However, the liberation of the larger half of the country, the looting by the Germans and the Arrow Cross, the increasingly open anti-German sentiment of the majority of the Hungarian soldiers did exert an influence on the population of the region. Their behaviour and especially that of the officials was influenced by the fate of the escaping officials. In January 1945, an order was issued according to which all state officials who had escaped had to be called up and only in very reasonable cases could they be exempted in order to fulfil their civilian functions. The flow of requests began; the officials tried every possible way to evade military service. The government attempted to end the process by banning wages and by introducing

other measures; this, however, only further increased the despair of those concerned. As a result of the alarming news arriving from Germany, only the leading officials were willing to evacuate from the towns of Transdanubia, and even most of those who had arrived from other parts of the country stayed in Western Hungary. The majority of the officials in Veszprém, Győr, Szombathely, Kaposvár and Zalaegerszeg remained in their native towns and this had a favourable effect on the population. The accounts arriving to the political department of the Szombathely Police at the end of January 1945 from Sopron, Mosonmagyaróvár, Pápa and Győr reported that the population refused to leave their native land, because if they had to be hungry and cold, at least they could do that at home. "A characteristic circumstance—the report on the behaviour of the residents of Sopron read—is that although they are extremely worried about the Russians, the public does not believe the articles published in the newspapers... There is a general aversion to evacuation."

The workers refused the orders to paralyze life here, too. In the spring of 1945, resistance was made easier by the extensive attack of the Red Army. At Székesfehérvár, which changed hands three times, the workers endeavoured to protect the machines of the Shotgun Cartridge Factory and the Bauxite Light Metal Works, while the railway workers tried to save the railway equipment and the undermined points. In Veszprém the workers removed some of the explosives placed under the viaduct, so when it was blown up only two smaller sections actually exploded. Only minor damage was done to the power stations of Várpalota, Ajka and Fűzfő, and the alumina and aluminium factory of the Hungarian Bauxite Co. In Tatabánya, the important equipments of the aluminium factory and the power station were saved, and smaller sabotage actions were carried out. The workers at the Mosonmagyaróvár section of the Shotgun Cartridge, Fuse and Metal Factory protected the equipment of the factory, and prevented the explosion of the plant. At the end of March 1945, the German detachment responsible for blowing up the factory found itself faced with 50 armed workers when they arrived. The blowing up of the plant was prevented and the Nazis were forced to leave the premises.

The liberation of Budapest and the larger part of the country, as well as the behaviour of the civilian population had a strong influence on the increasingly demoralized Hungarian army. Not only the simple rank and file soldiers, but also the officers feared that they would be sent to Germany. This was quite evident even to a group of MPs visiting the troops. Those representatives who had visited Germany obtained quite unfavourable experiences as to the way the Hungarians were received, accommodated and fed there. The increasingly demoralized Hungarian army was very negatively affected by the fact that the military hospitals were all transported to Germany, while the sick were left behind without any medical care. They also had to notice that the Hungarians were given the thankless task of the rear-guard, and even the smallest Hungarian units were commanded by the Germans. Masses began to desert. The soldiers simply fell behind their units in great numbers. Even whole companies "dissolved" from one day to another.

An increasing number of Hungarian soldiers took the side of the Red Army. Sections, platoons, companies, later regiments and even divisions, went over or gave themselves up to the Soviet Forces. The 24th division opened up the front in Slovakian territory when they went over to the Red Army. According to the data available, another three infantry regiments, 12 battalions and an artillery battalion went over to the Soviet forces. Later on, these served as the main basis for the reorganized battalions of the democratic Hungarian state. In Budapest, a part of the military groups joining the liberators, nearly two and a half thousand people, were organized into a separate unit, and under the name "Buda Volunteer Regiment", took part in the liberation of Buda with arms in hand. 600 of them had died the death of heroes. The remaining soldiers of the regiment were transported to Jászberény, where they formed the nucleus of the first army division that was organized later.

The Hungarian soldiers crowded in Transdanubia left their weapons in masses. The Chief of Staff managed to collect 50 thousand weapons thrown away in this area alone. The forests, villages of Transdanubia were full of dawdling soldiers waiting for the front to move on, while the towns were crowded with active military officers who, at the sight of the old society's decay, escaped from reality to wild carousals. During the raids that followed one another, hundreds of deserters were arrested. As the front moved towards the Western border of the country, the falling apart and disorganization of the Hungarian army became complete. A few characteristic figures: during the general raid held on 2 February 1945, 995 deserted soldiers, 2 325 soldiers not directed anywhere, 4 125 individuals who had refused orders to enlist, 64 workers who had left their war factories, 5 partisans and 129 deserted forced labourers were arrested. 150 of them were put to the sword during the raid. Five days later in Győr 2 360 person were arrested as deserted soldiers, as of military age or refusing to return from leave. The retaliatory steps, the public executions, fastenings and the dragging away of family members—all these could not bring an end to the complete decay of the Hungarian army. Soviet Colonel Malakov who took part in the liberation of Hungary published very characteristic data: "The Hungarian soldiers, as our forces began to get near the Austrian-Hungarian border, began to give themselves up. On 28, 29 and 30 March... South of the Danube (in Transdanubia—I. P.) app. 45 000 soldiers and officers were taken prisoner."

The majority of the Hungarian units transferred to Germany had also become useless and, in certain cases, even went over to the side of the resistance forces. As a result, on 31 March 1945 the *Oberkommando des Heeres* (the supreme command of the German land forces) had issued an order to disarm the Hungarian forces and enlist them into work units. Similar measures were taken with regard to the Hungarian units stationed on Czechoslovak territories. Thus, the Hungarian fascist army ceased to exist formally as well.

Naturally, the passive resistance of the Hungarian people could not have prevented the ransacking of the country. Only the value of the factory equipment, machinery and raw materials dragged away surpassed the two thousand million

dollar mark, not to mention food, animal stock and the national treasures. Nearly 170 000 Hungarian soldiers were also transported out of Hungary, although they could hardly have been used in action. The fact that the devastation was not as great as planned by the fascists, that the country did not become one heap of ruins was the result of the decisive role played by the passive forms of resistance.

Hungary was liberated by the Red Army in six months of heavy fighting taking the life of nearly 150 thousand Soviet soldiers. However, we would do the Hungarian people an injustice without emphasizing that passive resistance was also attached to the Hungarian anti-fascists movement, thus, it was a part of the struggle waged for the liberation of the country. Precisely as a result of Arrow-Cross and Nazi devastation, the vast majority of the Hungarian people could realize, during the struggle waged by the Red Army for the liberation of the country, that it was the pro-Nazi policies of the Hungarian ruling classes that had led the country into catastrophe; thus, after the war, the reconstruction of the country could begin on new routes. It was this awareness, as reflected by mass-scale passive resistance, which led to the development of the popular democratic revolution through the awakening people's power.

*

In its external and internal conditions and results, Hungarian anti-fascist resistance considerably differed from resistance in the other European countries; yet its essence, its tasks and main motivating forces were basically the same.

The Hungarian anti-fascist resistance movement was not merely the vehicle of struggle against German and Hungarian fascism, but also that of the democratic rebirth of the country. In Hungary, the organized cooperation of anti-fascist political forces, the coalition of the anti-Hitlerite political parties, was not established before the end of the German occupation, but germs of this process with their positive influence had already existed since the beginning of the war. Just as the Hungarian Front was the predecessor of the people's democracy to be born, and its political organ, so the local organs, born from the resistance struggles, had become the local representatives of a new people's power. In Hungary, armed struggle had not become the general form of resistance; accordingly, the representatives of the new political power were not so much those who waged the armed struggle, but rather the key persons of passive resistance and of the National Front. After the liberation of the successive regions of the country, these men and women took over in most cases without waiting for orders from above, with the support of the majority of the population. This would have been unimaginable had they not won their spurs in the eyes of the people and their agreement with their merits in the anti-German struggle.

In Hungary, the resistance movement developed relatively slowly, and it could not reach the stage of an armed uprising because of the two German interventions in 1944. The Soviet Union, the Red Army, therefore, played a far greater role in this

country than in any other along the Danube. Accordingly, its positive influence was also more pronounced in the post-liberation political struggles.

In Hungary the anti-German wing of the bourgeoisie was reluctant to fight all through the war, and only part of it joined the Hungarian Front. The influence of popular forces was more significant right from the outset. With Horthy's shameful and clumsy performance of 15 October, the anti-German wing of the bourgeoisie forfeited for the most part its opportunity to gain a lasting foothold in the new political power (even though the provisional national government formed on 22 December 1944 included three Horthyist ministers and Béla Miklós became the Prime Minister). From the start, the power relations of the coalition reflected a predominance of the consistently democratic forces. The program of the Hungarian Front, and later on of the Hungarian National Independence Front founded in the areas already liberated was based on the anti-fascist national-unity front politics elaborated by the communists in 1936-37 and developed in 1941. From the moment of its birth, this program counted upon an anti-fascist world coalition and on the decisive role of the Soviet Union within that, considering it the *external* precondition of the implementation of the tasks set for the national unity front. In addition, it counted upon the unity of anti-Nazi forces, especially the alliance of workers and peasants, as the *internal* precondition of anti-German struggle and democratic transformation. Despite the weakness of anti-fascist resistance, the liberating role of the Soviet Union, the establishment of the unity of action of the working class and the favourable development of the worker-peasant alliance made it possible for the new state power born in the moment of the country's liberation to go for a democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants.

Thus, the basic conditions for the development of the people's democratic revolution were essentially two: One was the liberating Soviet Union, whose army so far from merely ousting the fascist occupiers, also crushed the oppressive organs of Hungarian fascism, bringing to the surface the revolutionary energy of the working classes. The other, internal, factor was the communist-led national front that organized popular resistance under extremely difficult conditions, and, by the end of the war, presented itself as the sole political factor. Without the ripening of the internal conditions of revolution, the liberating mission of the Soviet Union could not have become the prime mover of Hungary's transformation into a people's democracy, just as the internal conditions of the people's democratic revolution could not have developed fully without the assistance of the Soviet Union.

This is how the Hungarian resistance movement is attached to the global anti-fascist struggle; and this is the reason why it ushered in the final phase of the independence struggle that had been waged for centuries by the Hungarian working people.

Index of Names

- Aczél, Ede 163, 166
 Aggteleky, Béla 189, 191
 Albrecht, Archduke 35
 Alexander, H. R. 160
 Almásy, Pál 207, 209, 211
 Ambrózy, Gyula 167, 181, 182
 Andorka, Rudolf 59, 93
 Antal, Helén 91
 Antal, István 48, 76, 101
 Antonescu, I. 82
 Apor, Vilmos 164
 Apponyi, György 63
 Apró, Antal 173, 200
 Asztalos, István 114

 Bach-Zelewski, E. 184
 Badoglio, P. 102, 111
 Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, Endre 16, 28–31, 36, 37, 39, 45,
 56, 59–61, 63, 65, 70, 73, 82, 84, 91, 93, 95,
 104–106, 108, 110–112, 124, 126, 129, 132, 135,
 191, 203, 204, 206–213
 Bakay, Szilárd 112, 185, 189
 Baky, László 56, 136, 160
 Balássy, Miklós 207, 211
 Bálint, György 49
 Bán, Antal 147, 178, 179
 Barankovics, István 25, 39, 59, 94, 132
 Bárány, L. 63
 Baranyai, Lipót 83, 104, 108
 Barcza, György 61, 133
 Barcs, Sándor 21, 70, 91, 93
 Bárdossy, László 11, 16, 35, 36, 38, 40, 43, 48
 Bartha, Bertalan 173, 200
 Bartha, Károly 64
 Bartók, János 36
 Batthyány, Lajos 24
 Bauer, Miklós 168
 Bay, Zoltán 166
 Becher, K. 196

 Bechtler, Péter 146
 Beleznay, István 207
 Benedek, Marcell 29
 Benjámín, László 42
 Bereczky, Albert 148
 Berényi, István 42
 Bernáth, Aurél 39, 45
 Bethlen, István 16, 36, 43, 61, 63, 84, 94, 104, 110,
 130, 131, 133, 160, 167, 168
 Bethlen, István Jr 164, 167
 Beregfy, Károly 211, 217
 Bognár, József 91
 Boldizsár, Iván 168
 Bonczos, Miklós 76, 129, 157
 Böhm, Vilmos 109
 Buchinger, Manó 66, 135
 Büchler, József 25, 55, 146

 Celevalchi, Károly 63
 Churchill, W. 61, 81, 122, 160
 Ciano, G. 35
 Clodius, K. 82

 Csataj, Lajos 79, 83, 159, 166
 Cseh, general 129
 Cserépfalvi, Imre 49
 Cserta, Lajos 36
 Csorba, János 63, 126, 203, 204

 Dallos, György 213
 Dancs, József 45, 90
 Darvas, József 19, 21, 25, 29, 39, 45, 114, 191
 Debrőczy, Tibor 168
 Décsi, Gyula 151
 Dékán, István 187
 Dési Huber, István 29
 Dessewffy, Gyula 25, 94, 147, 148, 175, 180, 206
 Dobi, István 70, 90, 111, 114, 121, 130
 Donáth, Ferenc 71, 90, 100, 113, 142, 222
 Dulles, A. W. 104

Eckhardt, Sándor 92
 Eckhardt, Tibor 110
 Egger, Lajos 145, 147
 Eichmann, A. 135
 Encsy, Pál 181
 Endre, László 56, 136
 Erdei, Ferenc 114
 Erdődy, Elek 25
 Erdős, László 59
 Esterházy, János 63
 Eszterházy, Mór 104, 108

Fábrí, József 187
 Fall, Endre 166
 Faraghó, Dezső 144
 Faraghó, Gábor 163, 189
 Faragó, József 115
 Farkas, Ferenc 189
 Farkas, Mihály 40
 Faust, Imre 166, 167
 Fehér, Lajos 21, 71, 173, 199
 Féja, Géza 114
 Fekete, Imre 90
 Fenyő, Miksa 168
 Fisch, Emil 166, 213
 Földeák, János 42
 Földes, Ferenc 14, 19, 21, 25, 29, 39, 55
 Földes, László 199, 214
 Földes, Mihály 14, 29
 Frey, András 81
 Friessner, H. 224
 Friss, István 40
 Fűredi, László 202

Gábor, Andor 40
 Gács, László 58
 Gallay, Emil 187, 188
 Gárdos, Mária 88
 Garibaldi, G. 108
 Gáspár, Zoltán 36, 39
 Gaulle, C. de 110
 Gergő, Zoltán 222
 Gerő, Ernő 40, 141
 Ghyczy, Jenő 102
 Gidófalvy, Lajos 214
 Goldmann, György 59
 Gosztonyi, Lajos 14, 29, 44, 70, 73, 92
 Gömbös, Gyula 48, 182
 Gratz, Gusztáv 63
 Grubics, Zoltán 187
 Guderian, H. 190

Gyenes, Antal 114
 Gyulai, Mihály 187, 188
 Gyürey, Rudolf 73
 Hadácsi, Rezső 181
 Hain, Péter 135
 Hamza, Ákos D. 166
 Hardy, Kálmán 189
 Harriman, W. A. 61
 Hárs, László 42
 Hatvany-Deutsch, baron 139
 Háry, Károly 49, 53
 Háry, Mihály 22
 Házy, András 63
 Hegedüs Bite, Dániel 36
 Hennyey, Gusztáv 191
 Herczeg, Ferenc 92, 166
 Heszlényi, József 189
 Hindy, Iván 191
 Hirossik, János 165
 Hitler A. 7, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, 29, 35–37, 42, 45, 48, 50, 51, 62, 64, 68, 73, 82, 86, 91, 92, 95–99, 101, 102, 106, 112–114, 122–124, 127, 132, 134, 149, 151, 160, 171, 172, 192, 203
 Hóman, Bálint 64, 136
 Hont, Ferenc 25, 28, 42
 Horthy, István 35
 Horthy, Miklós 9, 27, 43, 44, 82, 83, 85, 87, 88, 94, 106, 110, 134, 136, 150, 153, 157, 159–164, 167, 171, 172, 179–193, 195, 202, 204, 205, 229
 Horthy, Miklós Jr 164, 167, 181, 190
 Horváth, Béla 25, 30
 Horváth, Márton 33, 142
 Horváth, Zoltán 63
 Huszár, Aladár baráti 30, 39, 59, 53, 94

Iliás, Ferenc 71, 90, 130
 Illés, Béla 188
 Illyés, Gyula 25, 39
 Imrédy, Béla 35, 49, 50, 52, 82, 83, 135, 160
 Incze, Antal 12

Jakubovits, Hermann 55
 Jankovich, Dénes 166
 Jaross, Andor 157, 160
 Jászi, Oszkár 154
 Jelinek, Ferenc 118
 Joó, Tibor 39
 Jordáky, Lajos 19, 29
 Józsa, Béla 45, 69, 117
 József, Attila 36, 53
 Jurcsik, Béla 77, 194
 Justus, Pál 147

Kabók, Lajos 124, 137, 144–146, 178, 179, 186, 198
 Kádár, János 58, 70, 96, 100, 113, 142, 143, 172
 Kaffka, colonel 207
 Kalamár, József 173
 Kállai, Gyula 14, 19, 20, 29, 36, 39, 44, 55, 60, 70, 73, 88, 92, 96, 106, 175, 176, 179, 180, 183, 203
 Kállay, Miklós 43, 44, 48–50, 52, 55, 56, 61, 64, 65, 71, 76, 80–85, 94, 97, 101–113, 117, 122–128, 130, 132, 133, 135, 169, 195
 Kálló, Ferenc 206
 Kánya, Kálmán 84
 Karácsony, Sándor 72, 144, 146, 198
 Karácsony, Sándor 114
 Kárlóczy, Ferenc 181
 Károlyi, Gyula 104
 Károlyi, Mihály 97, 153, 154, 155
 Kárpáti, Aurél 39
 Kassák, Lajos 42
 Kasztl, András 14, 29, 44, 55, 68
 Katona, János 39, 45
 Katona, Jenő 39
 Keitel, W. 35
 Kende, István 201
 Kenessey, Pongrácz 175
 Keresztes, Mihály 121
 Keresztes-Fischer, Ferenc 12, 36, 39, 52, 55, 56, 64, 84, 87, 110, 115, 135
 Kéry, Kálmán 163, 188, 189
 Keszthelyi, Géza 145
 Keszthelyi, Zoltán 42
 Kéthly, Anna 25, 63, 88, 89, 108, 125, 126, 129, 145
 Kis, Ferenc 42
 Kis, József 91
 Kiss, Gergely 90
 Kiss, János 61, 126, 206, 207, 211–213
 Kiss, Károly 173, 199, 214
 Kodolányi, János 114
 Kollontay, A. M. 163
 Koltói, Anna 198
 Koós, Béla 201
 Kornis, Gyula 92
 Kossuth, Lajos 22, 24, 45, 46, 70, 127
 Kovács, Béla 26, 90, 148, 175
 Kovács, Éva 114
 Kovács, Imre 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, 36, 39, 42, 45, 49, 55, 114, 180, 181, 182, 203
 Kovács, István 67, 92
 Kovai, Lőrinc 55
 Kovpak, S. A. 121
 Kőműves, József 138
 Kővágó, József 207, 211

Kövecz János 63
 Közi Horváth, József 10
 Krenner, Miklós 37, 39
 Kreutz, Róbert 212
 Krochina, Viktor 164
 Kunder, Antal 160

Lakatos, Géza 159, 161, 184, 189
 László, Gyula 42
 Lázár, Károly 165, 181, 182, 185, 189
 Lendvai, István 31
 Lenyka, Elek 55
 Losonczy, Géza 14, 44, 70
 Lukács, Béla 48
 Lukács, Imre 42

Magyar, Ferenc 167
 Makay, Miklós 211
 Makay-Petrovics György 61
 Makray, Lajos 63
 Malakov, colonel 227
 Malasits, Géza 14, 82, 124, 135
 Malinovsky, R. I. 208, 210
 Mannerheim, G. E. 171
 Mária, Béla 42
 Markos, György 25, 29, 148, 222
 Marosán, György 24, 36, 58, 60, 88, 138, 147, 178
 Máté, György 60
 Mihályfi, Ernő 39, 91
 Miklós, Béla, dálnoki 187–189, 192, 229
 Mikó, Zoltán 167
 Mikulics, Tibor 211
 Millok, Sándor 59, 87, 118, 135
 Mindszenty, József 164
 Mód, Aladár 14, 19, 29, 42, 55, 70
 Mogyoróssy, Imre 225
 Moldvai, Sándor 145
 Molnár, Imre 145, 146
 Molnár, Kálmán 37
 Molotov, V. M. 189, 208, 210
 Mónus, Illés 55, 98, 99, 119, 135, 146, 178
 Móricz, Zsigmond 29, 30
 Morvay, Endre 164
 Mussolini, B. 82, 102, 105, 184

Náday, István 163
 Nagy, Ferenc 26, 37, 39, 63, 65, 71, 72, 89, 90, 111, 114, 124, 125, 130–132, 135
 Nagy, Imre 40
 Nagy, István 39, 42, 73, 114
 Nagy, Jenő 166, 182, 206, 207, 210–213
 Nagybaczoni Nagy, Vilmos 63, 83, 88, 169
 Németh, László 114

Németh, Pál 207
 Neuberger, Pál 187
 Nógrádi, Sándor 40, 187
 Nonn, György 199
 Novák, Károly 151
 Nyisztor, György 155
 Olt, Károly 222
 Oltványi, Imre 91
 Orbán, László 100, 113, 142, 201, 222
 Orendy, Norbert 211
 Orosz, Dezső 59
 Ortutay, Gyula 25, 70, 91
 Oszip, István 116
 Pajor, Rudolf 59, 66
 Pálffy, Géza 63
 Pálffy, György 91, 107, 108, 151, 173, 181, 200, 206
 Pálffy, József 175
 Pallavicini, Alfonz 63
 Pallavicini, György 63, 148
 Pálóczy Horváth, György 55
 Palotás, Mihály 114
 Panagi, György 39
 Pataki, István 212
 Pataki, László 129
 Pátzay, Pál 39
 Paulus, F. 151
 Péntes, Géza 166, 210
 Pesti, Barnabás 212
 Péter, Gábor 100, 113, 142, 210
 Pethő, Sándor 28
 Petőfi, Sándor 22, 37, 39, 41–43, 45, 92
 Petrov, I. I. 188
 Peyer, Károly 14–16, 36, 43, 57, 63, 65, 66, 72, 82, 87–89, 94, 106, 108, 109, 115, 118, 124–126, 129, 135, 137, 144, 179
 Pfeiffer, Zoltán 147, 175, 180, 206
 Plancsák, János 55
 Platthy, Pál 206
 Polgár, Dezső 167
 Radnóti, Miklós 25
 Radocsay, László 129
 Radvánszky, Albert 104
 Radvánszky, Rezső 146
 Radványi, Imre 206, 207, 210
 Raffay, Sándor 76
 Rahn, R. 190
 Raics, István 39
 Rajcsányi, Károly 42

Rajk, László 172, 176, 181–183, 185, 206, 210, 211
 Rákosi, Mátyás 40, 141, 154
 Rassay, Károly 25, 63, 84, 107, 108, 130, 131, 135
 Rátz, Jenő 160
 Ravasz, Károly 151
 Ravasz, László 145, 164
 Rédey, Tivadar 92
 Reinefarth, H. 184
 Reményi-Schneller, Lajos 62, 139, 194
 Rende, András 60
 Révai, József 40
 Révay, Kálmán 206, 211
 Révész, Imre 42, 218
 Révész, László 63
 Révész, Mihály 29
 Rezi, Károly 54
 Ribbentrop, J. 35
 Rommel, E. 61
 Rónai, Ferenc 202
 Rónai, Sándor 24, 138
 Roosevelt, F. D. 61, 81, 122, 151
 Rosta, Endre 60
 Rózsa, Ferenc 32, 54
 Rubletzky, Géza 91
 Ságvári, Endre 24, 69, 115, 153
 Salamon, Ferenc 42
 Schiffer, Pál 145, 146
 Schönberger, Dávid 55
 Schönherz, Zoltán 54, 59, 60, 70
 Schöpflin, Aladár 92
 Schreiber, Róbert 207, 211
 Serédi, Jusztinián 60, 218
 Sigray, Antal 61, 63, 130
 Simándy, Pál 25
 Sinka, István 114
 Skolnik, József 58, 92
 Skorzeny, O. 184
 Sólyom, László 91, 173, 206
 Sombor-Schweinitzer, József 56, 57, 61, 66, 78, 116, 135
 Somogyi, Imre 114
 Somogyi, Miklós 24, 39, 45, 138, 166, 167
 Stalin, I. V. 61, 122
 Steiner, Géza 168
 Stollár, Béla 102
 Szabó, Ferenc 145
 Szabó, Ferenc Jr 145
 Szabó, István 36
 Szabó, István B. 63
 Szabó, Pál 114

Szabó, Zoltán 25
 Szakasits, Árpád 14, 15, 22, 24, 25, 29, 33, 34, 39, 41, 43, 51, 54–59, 70, 72, 88, 92, 100, 115, 120, 145, 147, 148, 175–182, 184, 190, 202
 Szakasits, György 2102
 Szálasi, Ferenc 190, 193–196, 198, 203
 Szántó, Zoltán 40
 Szász, István 145
 Szász, Lajos 194
 Száva, István 147
 Széchenyi, László 63
 Szeder, Ferenc 58, 63, 67, 72, 87, 125, 145, 146
 Szekeres, Sándor 129
 Szekfü, Gyula 19, 29–31, 37, 39, 59, 92, 107
 Szélig, Imre 147
 Szemere, Béla 3
 Szent-Györgyi, Albert 37, 71, 81, 164, 165, 210, 219
 Szentimrei, Jenő 39
 Szentiványi, Lajos 63
 Szimkovics, Salamon 55
 Szinnyi Merse, Jenő 64
 Szirmai, Hédi 129
 Szirmai, István 67, 69, 100, 113, 117
 Szombathelyi, Ferenc 60, 110, 130, 140
 Szőnyi, István 39
 Szőnyi, Pál 187
 Sztójay, Döme 136, 137, 146, 149, 160, 171
 Szüdi, György 42
 Szüllő, Géza 63
 Takács, József 29, 167
 Táncsics, Mihály 24, 45
 Tartsay, Vilmos 207, 211–213
 Teleki, Pál 10, 43, 169
 Tildy, Zoltán 16, 37, 39, 49, 63, 65, 72, 82, 94, 99, 104, 105, 107, 108, 125, 126, 132, 135, 148, 180–182, 184
 Tito, I. B. 149, 156
 Tolnai, Gábor 25, 91
 Tombor, Jenő 61, 132
 Tonhauser, Pál 67, 69, 70, 100, 113, 117, 129
 Tóth, István 207, 211
 Tóth, Mihály 58, 60
 Tömpe, István 222

Újszászy, István 181, 182
 Újváry, Dezső 103
 Ullein-Reviczky, Antal 21, 109
 Urffy, Sándor 114
 Uszta, Gyula 187
 Vaád, Ferenc 42
 Váci, Lajos 63
 Vajna, Gábor 55, 195
 Vály, Ferenc 81
 Vámbéry, Rusztem 154
 Varga, Béla 39, 63, 65, 91, 111, 114, 131, 132
 Varga, József 83
 Vargha, Károly 214
 Várnai, Dániel 29
 Várnai, Zseni 165
 Vásáry, István 63
 Vasváry, József 188
 Vasváry, Lajos 137
 Vas-Witteg, Miklós 146
 Vattay, Antal 189, 191
 Vázsonyi, János 164
 Veesenmayer, E. 137, 190
 Veres, Péter 39, 114
 Veress, László 81
 Veress, Lajos, dálnoki 189, 192
 Veress, Sándor 39
 Vető, Mihály 42
 Vida, Ferenc 59
 Voinovich, Géza 92
 Vörös, János 140, 158, 162, 181, 182, 189, 190, 192, 202, 203, 217
 Vörös, Vince 90
 Weinberger, Miklós 201
 Werth, Henrik 13
 Wiener, Rudolf 55
 Zelk, Zoltán 42
 Zgyerka, János 201
 Zhukov, G. K. 156
 Zichy, János 63
 Zilahy, Lajos 164
 Zimmer, József 168
 Zsabka, Kálmán 214
 Zsigmond, Ede 42